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*SOME DIFFICULTIES
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OUR LORD**

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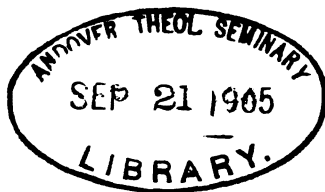
BY THE
REV. GEORGE S. COCKIN, M.A.
AUTHOR OF 'THE MARRIAGE SERVICE'



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PREFACE

EVERY thoughtful man and woman finds some difficulty or difficulties in the life of our Blessed Lord. With some these difficulties seem to be of so great consequence that until an explanation is forthcoming they refuse to believe in our Lord's claims and teaching, and to accept Him as their Lord and Master. It is useless to point out the folly of such a method of proceeding ; for they will be satisfied with nothing less than a solution of their difficulty.

This unpretentious volume has been compiled to serve this purpose. It contains nothing new, nothing original. It is a book of scraps, in which the difficulties most frequently expressed are briefly dealt with. The chapters of this book I have divided into sections, each section dealing with one incident or discourse from our Lord's earthly life. Each section is complete in itself.

I take this opportunity of expressing my warmest thanks to the Rev. T. Bingley Boss, M.A., of West Didsbury, for his invaluable suggestions and help in preparing this book.

And now I send forth these pages, praying God to bless

them in the cause of truth and godliness, and to make them sufficient to remove the difficulties from the minds of some ; and hoping that those who read, as they more perfectly understand the incidents and discourses of Him about whom these pages are written, may be led to live that life which is His only to bestow—the life of ‘faith in the Son of God.’

G. S. C.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE NATIVITY - - - - -	I
II. PREPARATION FOR THE MINISTRY - - -	13
III. THE BEGINNING OF THE MINISTRY - -	19
IV. OUR LORD'S EARLY MINISTRY - - -	26
V. OUR LORD'S EARLY MINISTRY— <i>continued</i> - -	38
VI. OUR LORD'S LATER MINISTRY - - -	84
VII. THE LAST WEEK AND CRUCIFIXION - -	124
VIII. THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION - -	165

CHAPTER I

THE NATIVITY

IT is impossible for any theologian to explain to his own satisfaction or the satisfaction of others all the several events connected with the birth and infancy of our Lord. It was the work of God, a supernatural communication of the Divine nature for the moral and spiritual renewal of man, and to venture an explanation on each part of that work would be a task as futile as it would be foolish. But whilst we cannot explain everything, there are some things, difficult though they may be, we can explain, and these will occupy our attention in this chapter.

THE GENEALOGIES (Matt. i. 1-16 ; Luke iii. 23-28).

Our Lord, we are taught, was supernaturally conceived, yet the genealogies in Matthew and Luke seem to preclude that conception by tracing His descent through Joseph. If this be the right method of reading these genealogies, must we deny altogether the work of the Holy Ghost in connection with our Lord's birth, and attribute that birth to the operation of another? For if He be the Son of Joseph, where is the room for the supernatural conception? Professor B. Weiss holds that it is manifestly absurd to give the genealogy of a man who was not the real father of our Lord, but only His supposed father, and

2 SOME DIFFICULTIES IN THE LIFE OF OUR LORD

therefore he concludes that the genealogies must be the genealogy of Mary.

Unhesitatingly we reply that both Matthew and Luke in their narratives give us what to Weiss is absurd—*i.e.*, the genealogy of Joseph; for only by violence can it be taken from Joseph and given to Mary. Joseph was the legal father of our Lord, though not his natural father, and therefore our Lord was the lawful heir to Joseph's genealogy. Mrs. Agnes Smith-Lewis* expresses this fact thus: 'Joseph was without doubt the foster-father of our Lord, and if any register of births was kept in the Temple or elsewhere he would probably be there described as the actual father. Such he was from a social point of view, and it was therefore no wilful suppression of the truth when the "most blessed amongst women" said to her Son, "Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing."'

The same writer further describes the genealogy of Matthew as a purely official one, and points out that our Lord's social status is under consideration in it.† Dr. Dalman makes the matter still clearer. He says: 'A case such as that of Jesus was, of course, not anticipated by the law; but if no other human fatherhood was alleged, then the child must have been regarded as bestowed by God upon the house of Joseph; for a betrothed woman, according to Israelitish law, already occupied the same status as a wife.' Evidence such as this shows that both genealogies belong, not to Mary, but to Joseph, and that the recognition by Joseph of the Child supernaturally born to Mary conferred upon that Child the legal rights of a son.‡

When we turn to the narratives of Matthew and Luke,

* To whom we owe the discovery of the Sinaitic Syriac palimpsest.

† Quoted by Professor Knowling in 'Our Lord's Virgin Birth and the Criticism of To-day.'

‡ *Ibid.*

we find that they give the genealogical lists side by side with their teaching of the supernatural birth. May we not infer from this that they did not regard the genealogies as conflicting with the supernatural conception of our Lord? Matthew evidently favours this view, for after giving the genealogy of Joseph in chapter i. of his narrative, he goes on to add: 'When as His mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.'*

Further testimony to this view is found in the absence of any trace of opposition in the Apostolic Church. Some of our Lord's brothers lived to see the Gospels compiled, yet never do we hear that they raised their voice against the historical truth of His supernatural birth. If the narratives of Matthew and Luke had been regarded by them as unhistorical, it is probable that some trace of opposition would be found.

St. Paul, though not writing a life of Jesus Christ, in his letters to the Churches makes allusion to the supernatural birth of our Lord in the womb of a virgin. For example, in Gal. iv. 4 he speaks of God sending forth His Son, who was 'made of a woman.' Why does he mention only the mother, since it is evident that it is much more decisive for the subjection of our Lord to the Mosaic law, to which the context refers, that He should have been born and have grown up as the son of an Israelitish man? Dr. Zahn replies: 'Plainly because in the thought of Paul there is no room for Joseph as the father of Jesus beside His heavenly Father.'† Again, in his first letter to the Corinthian Church,‡ St. Paul appears to have the same thought in mind: he represents our Lord as the 'second Man who is of heaven.' He was contrasting Adam with our Lord—the one of the earth, the other from heaven. Had our Lord

* Matt i. 18. † Quoted by Professor Knowling. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 47.

4 SOME DIFFICULTIES IN THE LIFE OF OUR LORD

become man in the usual course of Adamic generations, He must have been attributed collectively with the whole race to the first man, to Adam. 'But it was,' observes Lang, 'that which was new, which was miraculous, in His origin; it was His actual origination from the life of the Spirit which made Him the second Man.' If we have interpreted these statements of the Apostle aright, St. Paul not only announces, but also offers proof of the mystery of the supernatural birth of our Lord.

Following on this testimony, we have that of Irenæus (*circa* 120-202), Tertullian (*circa* 150-220), Clement of Alexandria (*circa* 150-215), Origen (*circa* 185-254), Hippolytus (the first half of the third century), Cyprian (*circa* 200-258), Lactantius (*circa* 260-340), to say nothing of others.

The question suggests itself: If our Lord's brothers knew of His miraculous conception, would they not have believed in Him as the Messiah? Not necessarily; for the history of our Lord's earthly ministry shows that miracles did not lead men to believe in His Messianic claims. If this be true of miracles—of healing the sick, and the raising of the dead—much less do we expect to find men persuaded by the miracle of the miraculous birth. It is not probable that they knew anything about it. Such a sacred fact we can hardly suppose Mary would disclose to her other children. It was not a matter for gossip, nor yet one which youthful minds could comprehend. It is more natural to think that Mary regarded the matter as a holy secret to be pondered in her own heart until after the resurrection of our Lord from the dead. This view, if correct, explains the silence of Mark and John about the virgin birth, and it may probably serve to account for the silence of the non-Pauline epistles.

Before leaving this subject we might observe that the unbelief of our Lord's brothers was at a later date trans-

formed into a stout faith in His Messianic claims, and this faith urged them to assist the Apostles in propagating them among their fellow-countrymen.

THE ENROLMENT (Luke ii. 1-3).

'History,' it is said, 'apart from St. Luke, knows nothing of a census of the whole Roman world, ordered to be made by Augustus.' How, then, shall we reconcile Luke's words, 'And it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus that all the world should be taxed,' with contemporary history?

Luke is not writing of a single census, but simply of the initiation of an imperial policy under Augustus—a policy which had for its object the periodic numberings of the people according to households, and had nothing to do with the valuation for the purposes of taxation or the taking of a single census. This is seen on a careful reading of Luke's Gospel and the Acts; for in the Gospel* he speaks of a certain census as 'the first,' and in the Acts† he mentions 'the census'—*i.e.*, according to Professor Ramsay, the great census, meaning the epoch-making census taken about A.D. 7, when Judæa had just been incorporated in the Roman Empire as part of the province of Syria.

Clement of Alexandria evidently understood Luke's words in the same way, for he speaks, in his 'Stromata,' of the occasion 'when first they ordered enrolments to be made.†

It is admitted by most authorities that the institution of the enrolment in the provinces of Rome dates from the time of Augustus, who was fond of gaining statistics of the resources of the Empire. These results demonstrate the

* Luke ii. 2.

† Acts v. 37.

‡ *Vide* Ramsay's 'Was Christ Born in Bethlehe m?'

6 SOME DIFFICULTIES IN THE LIFE OF OUR LORD

fact that Luke is quite correct in his mention of the enrolment in Luke ii. 1, though he speaks in very general terms.

But how shall we account for the visit of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem? Would a Roman census cause them to go to Bethlehem? If the census were taken after the Roman fashion, Joseph and Mary would not be compelled to leave their home and journey to Bethlehem; but a Roman decree for an enrolment is not necessarily to be understood as implying that the enrolment was to be taken after the Roman fashion.* It is quite in accordance with what we know of the character of those times and of Roman policy that such enrolments did take place, and that the Government on so small a matter stooped to meet the sentiments and feelings of the people. The Jewish national feeling was at this time as strong as at any time, and it would be better policy on the part of Rome to allow an exception to be made in regard to the manner of effecting this enrolment among the people than to throw the whole country into a state of revolt. This is the view of Professor Ramsay, B. Weiss and others, and is made very probable by comparing the effect of this series of enrolments with that enrolment mentioned in Acts v. 37. The latter was conducted after the Roman fashion, and gave rise to much indignation, which developed into a rebellion; whilst the former case was followed by no evil consequences, not even a note of dissatisfaction being struck. There must have been some cause for this difference, and it is only a reasonable inference to suppose that in the one case Jewish feelings were considered, and in the other they were disregarded. If this inference be allowed, here is the probable explanation as to why Joseph and Mary left their home at Nazareth to go to Bethlehem.

* On the Jewish form of enrolment, see Ebrard's 'Gospel History.'

Why Mary accompanied Joseph we do not know for certain. She may have gone of her own freewill, and was not compelled to go. If an orphan, she may have been compelled to go to represent her own line—perhaps that of Heli. One thing is certain, there was no law which compelled her to stay at home.

Objection has been raised by Schürer, Zumpt, Turner and others, against the mention of Quirinius in connection with the taking of the enrolment mentioned in Luke ii. 1. 'Quirinius,' say they, 'was not Governor of Syria in Herod's lifetime, although he may have occupied the position of Governor of Syria at a later date.'

Professor Ramsay argues that Quirinius, in the period 7.5 B.C., was the commanding officer in Syria, a position which might also have involved the control of foreign policy. Luke would naturally call him 'leader,' which in our Revised Version is rendered 'Governor.' Dr. Plummer goes farther, and says that the word employed by Luke* is 'quite compatible with the belief that Quirinius held some military post in Syria even in Herod's lifetime.' He goes on to cite Justin Martyr, who refers to Quirinius at the time of the Nativity by the word equivalent to one holding the office of procurator, and not by a word signifying *legatus*, as Quirinius afterwards became in A.D. 6.

Of the other events recorded by the Evangelists in connection with the birth of our Lord, two only we will consider here—(a) the visit of the wise men, and (b) the massacre of the innocents.

THE VISIT OF THE WISE MEN (Matt. ii. 1-12).

An endeavour was always made by the ancients to connect great events with celestial phenomena. Men

* *Vide* Hastings' 'Bible Dict.,' art. 'Quirinius.'

started from the supposition that so striking a phenomenon in the heavens must have corresponding to it a similar one on earth in the circumstances of men. For instance, shining phenomena in the sky were supposed to have been seen at the time of the birth of Augustus, Alexander the Great and Mithridates. Some of these wonderful signs bear so great a resemblance to that which accompanied the birth of our Lord that critics have supposed, and endeavoured to prove, that the Evangelist has referred to the birth of Jesus Christ some celestial phenomenon which was supposed to have appeared at the birth of some royal personage. Soltau, for example, tells us that in the explanation of the wonderful signs observed at the time of the birth of Augustus the interpreters of signs are supposed to have declared that they announced the birth of *the Lord of the world*. From this he infers that the idea of referring this account to the *true Lord and Saviour of the world* naturally occurred to the Church writer. 'The sign in the sky at once suggested the idea of introducing into the narrative the interpreters of signs, the wise men.'

In the inscriptions recording the birth of Augustus reference is made to the Emperor as *saviour* of the whole human race, and the day of his birth is described as *a day of glad tidings to the world*. But are not these expressions to be found in the Old Testament and the Apocryphal writings? Soltau carefully suppresses all reference to the Old Testament descriptions of the coming of the Messiah as a Saviour, and of the Messianic reign as a reign of universal peace. We cannot think that this suppression is unintentional, for then his arguments would have but little weight.

Any force Saltau's parallel may appear to have is removed by Professor Knowling, who observes that 'no parallel of any weight can really be instituted between the Gospel

narrative and the story of the birth of Augustus, because in the latter case no birth of a virgin is in question.'

But if, for the sake of argument, the sign in the sky, observed at the time of the birth of Augustus, suggested the idea of introducing the wise men into the Gospel narrative, how are we to account for the wise men's change of residence and act of adoration? The story of the birth of Augustus cannot be construed in such a manner as to account for these. Soltau is candid enough to admit this, and has recourse to the account of the homage offered to Nero by the Parthian King, Tiridates. Soltau writes: 'In the year A.D. 66 the Parthian King, Tiridates, having journeyed with a great following through the cities of Asia Minor to the West, then offered homage to Nero in Rome. Here he worshipped Nero as his god—as the sun-god, Mithras—and then returned by another route through the cities of Asia. This journey of the wise men from the East to Rome threw the whole cultured world into a state of astonishment'; and the first Evangelist felt that 'their act of adoration could only be explained by transferring it from the antichrist Nero to the Messiah.' From these remarks it would appear that no absurdities are too great to be pressed into the service of those who deny the facts relating to our Lord's birth.

A brief statement of the facts of the journey of King Tiridates will suffice to show how little resemblance there is between it and the incident of the wise men recorded by Matthew. Tiridates did not come to Rome of his own accord; he was compelled to come by Nero. There had been a long struggle on the part of the Parthians to gain possession of Armenia. Tiridates had been placed on the throne by the people, and expelled by the Romans. He made a second attempt to regain it, and was allowed to continue in possession on condition of personally acknow-

ledging Nero as his suzerain, and journeying to the capital to receive the crown from the Emperor. His errand was purely a political one, and, instead of throwing 'the whole cultured world into a state of astonishment,' was regarded at the time as an event of no special importance. It was a common thing for subject potentates to repair to Rome for the confirmation of their claims, and the visit of Tiridates was regarded as an affair of this class. There is scarcely more than a passing reference to it in Roman literature. Pliny mentions it, but only tells us that Tiridates was at the Court on political business. He passes over the act of homage without a word of notice. His only reason for referring to the Armenian King at all is his mention of Nero's desire to learn sorcery, which Tiridates tried to teach him during his stay.

In doing homage for the crown of Armenia, Tiridates, an unprincipled flatterer and parasite of the worst kind, might be expected to address Nero as a deity, especially when the worship of Cæsar was common. We will only add to these remarks that Soltau's authority for the words used is a historian who was not born until A.D. 155; also that Soltau gives no quotations from Suetonius and Tacitus. The arguments of Soltau have not found a ready acceptance among his own friends, the supposed parallel having no proof but Soltau's own suggestion.

We know for certain that the birth of our Lord was not at that time looked upon as a great event, and attention was not directed to it, save the attention of the wise men. But at the same time we know that there prevailed throughout the entire East an intense conviction, derived from ancient prophecies, that ere long a powerful monarch should arise in Judæa and gain dominion over the world. Is it not probable that the wise men participated in this conviction, and took their journey to Jerusalem at the appearance of

some celestial phenomenon, which awakened in them a more immediate conviction that this widespread expectation was on the point of fulfilment?

The celestial phenomenon itself still remains a matter of doubt. Many explanations have been offered, but they have not succeeded in establishing anything definite. The great astronomer Kepler, in 1614, calculated that a conjunction of the planets Jupiter and Saturn took place 7 B.C. This conjunction would certainly present a rare and splendid spectacle, and would cause much interest to those engaged in the study of the stars. Kepler supposes this to be the star of the wise men in Matt. ii. This theory has the support of Alford and other eminent scholars, but has been shown by Professor Pritchard to be scientifically impossible.*

From a theory propounded by Professor Lauth, of Munich, it appears that the dog-star Sirius rose at sunrise on the first day of the Egyptian month Messori for four years in succession—viz., 5, 4, 3, 2, before our era. The rising of this star of special brilliance on the first of this special month (Messori = birth of the prince) would have a marked significance. By the wise men it might well be connected with the prophecy of 'the star of Jacob,'† and become the cause of their journey to Jerusalem. This theory explains the edict of Herod for the destruction of the male children, but it cannot be accepted as sufficient explanation of the astronomical feature. Other explanations have been advanced, but they all fail to tell us what the celestial phenomenon really was. Nor have we any hesitation in making this confession when we remember the great number of astronomical possibilities.

* Kepler's theory has the support of the latest chronological results. *Vide* Hastings' 'Bible Dict.'

† Num. xxiv. 17.

THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS (Matt. ii. 16-18).

The massacre of the innocents has been doubted because it is not found recorded in any contemporary history other than the Gospel according to Matthew: Josephus knew nothing of it, or, if he knew of it did not mention it.

To argue from silence is universally acknowledged to be an unsound manner of reasoning, and to write the word 'spurious' over this incident because of the silence of contemporary historians would be as illogical as it would be unfair.

The character of Herod, as known from the records of the writers of his day, makes us feel that a crime of this nature, or even of a worse nature, was not only probable, but also of common occurrence. Anything that would oppose the schemes of his unbounded ambition, or anyone who should arouse his most excruciating jealousy, at once incurred his anger and the severity of his tortures. He who caused the death of John the Baptist, massacred priests and nobles, strangled his favourite wife, and spared not his own sons, would have little hesitation in destroying a number of young babes, of which one might arise to prove a rival to himself for the throne. Among the number of butcheries and crimes of which he was guilty we can conceive that the murder of a few children in consequence of a transient suspicion might be overlooked or ignored by historians of the time as being an event of little moment compared with Herod's other crimes. Edersheim's explanation makes this view still more probable. He shows the number of the slain innocents to have been greatly exaggerated by most writers, and so the difficulty has been magnified. Bethlehem, he reminds us, was but a village of probably some 2,000 inhabitants, and in a village of that size the number of young children of the age of two years must have been very small—probably twenty, or even less.

CHAPTER II

PREPARATION FOR THE MINISTRY

THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD (Matt. iii. 13-17;
Mark i. 9-11; Luke iii. 21, 22).

WATER has been made the symbol of purification by all nations, and used with that signification in the rites of all religions. The heathen used diverse kinds of baptism to expiate their crimes, and the Jews baptized such as were admitted proselytes at large.* When any nations who were already circumcised became Jews, they also were received by baptism only. In the days of John the Baptist there was 'a general declension from the spirit of true Judaism, and leaders, as well as the people in general, required a great universal purification before they were meet to receive the Messiah. With boldness John told them that all the community were unclean, and must undergo a holy ablution before they could be ready to enter the kingdom of God,' which the Messiah was about to inaugurate. Thus John in fact excommunicated the nation, and prescribed for it repentance as the only means of entering the new community. This baptism of repentance was, he taught, but a type of another baptism, which the Messiah Himself should originate—the baptism with the Holy Ghost. This was conditional; for until sin had been put away from the life, and a change of mind had followed, and this had been declared in the former baptism, the higher baptism, which was the real participation of our Lord's heavenly life, could not be administered.

With these brief notices before us we now turn to the question so often asked, 'How could our Lord allow

* Cf. Dr. Wall on 'Infant Baptism.'

Himself to be baptized?' Lange has offered an answer to this question, which he bases upon the doctrine of impurity, derived from contact with that which is unclean. 'According to the Levitical law,* our Lord was unclean by His connection with an unclean people,' he says, 'and on the principles of the Old Testament righteousness, therefore, His baptism was required.' This supposition, as Carl Hase points out, overlooks the fact that the people, from a theocratic point of view, must have been considered the people of God, and must therefore be dismissed as unsatisfactory. The explanation of Ebrard is that our Lord's baptism was only a symbolic act, in which His death and resurrection were prefigured. This would give to the baptism of John a sense which only came afterward in Christian baptism, which is incredible.

Our Lord Himself says of that act that He wished to 'fulfil all the righteousness' (δικαιοσύνην) of the law, and every part of that wider righteousness of which the law is but a type. He sought to show the spirit of absolute submission to every portion of righteousness, as it has been, and may be, proposed to men, by God, to perform.

But there is more in this solemn act than even this. Our Lord at His baptism formally recognised and entered upon His distinctly Messianic duties, an act which involved the leaving of His past mode of life and the giving Himself up to a new and public life.

Have we any evidence to show that our Lord came to John for baptism with this self-consciousness? May He not very well have known the time when His official life should begin? It is more probable that He came to consecrate Himself by this rite to His life's work, so that when the time seemed ripe and the way clear He should go forward in reliance upon His Father to fulfil His

* Lev. xi., xiv.

mission, which He had been sent into this world to accomplish. He knew no sin, therefore needed not to be washed from sin: He came to suffer as man's representative for sin; but here He could not have been the representative for those who were coming to John's baptism of their own accord; but He, as a true Israelite, was called upon to prepare Himself for the coming kingdom of God, and by His baptism publicly acknowledges His desire for that kingdom, and consecrates Himself to the furthering and hastening of that end.

The same thing may be expressed in another way. Since our Lord was also the Messiah, He must be anointed and specially set apart for His work, and publicly enter upon it. His baptism was His anointing, and the descending of the Holy Ghost upon Him testified to John the Baptist that the Messiah had indeed come, and from henceforth should publicly announce His kingdom in His own person. Hitherto He had the consciousness of Sonship as Son of God, but now He has received, for the first time, the power of proving Himself to be such to the world.

THE TEMPTATION (Matt. iv. 1-11; Mark i. 12, 13;
Luke iv. 1-13).

The only other incident in this period of our Lord's preparation for the ministry that demands our notice is the temptation in the wilderness. It is an event full of difficulties, and accordingly has received many and various explanations. L. Konnemann* has supposed it to be composed of three attacks directed against the three essential doctrines of Christianity—viz., (1) that of the union of two natures in Jesus Christ; (2) that of the *communicatio idiomatum*; and (3) that of justification by faith.

* Vide 'The Life of Jesus,' by Carl Hase, p. 90.

16 SOME DIFFICULTIES IN THE LIFE OF OUR LORD

But this resembles the mythical notion of a Satan deceived by our Lord, and contradicts the plain statements of the text, which speak only of an offer of all the kingdoms of the world.

This notion is strengthened by Ebrard, who supposes a threat to have been added by Satan to let loose against the Lord the whole frightful power of sin. But of all this the Gospels know nothing.

These difficulties of interpretation are not diminished if we assume a human tempter, sent by the Sanhedrin or by any other persons, for the purpose of helping, testing, or destroying our Lord.

Lange has combined the two views, and supposes that an emissary of the Sanhedrin, and behind him the devil, tempted our Lord in the wilderness. But this is merely to bring together the difficulties from both sides.

In arriving at a right interpretation of the narrative three things must be taken account of: (a) If our Lord knew beforehand what was to befall Him in the wilderness the power of the temptation would have been largely taken away, and He Himself would have been guilty of conduct which He urges His disciples to pray that they may be delivered from—'Lead us not into temptation.' We suppose, rather, that our Lord went into the wilderness to contemplate His great life's work, and there, alone, the devil met Him and tempted Him. (β) It is reasonably certain that the narrative is symbolic as well as historical. Taken literally, it is not in keeping with our Lord's moral character, for He would have recognised Satan at least after the first temptation, and could not have had further parley with him.* The third temptation, moreover, would cease to be a temptation to our Lord, it is so gross. Even an ordinarily good man would recoil with horror from a

* *Vide* Gilbert's 'Student's Life of Jesus,' p. 61.

proposition to worship the devil, especially if this proposition were to be made by the devil in person.* Again, we must suppose, if we take a literal view of the incident, that the devil actually carried our Lord to the top of the Temple, and, again, to the top of some high mountain. To do this, he must either force Jesus to go, which is inconceivable, since the devil had never had any power in or over Him ; or we are left to assume that Jesus went voluntarily with Satan, which is equally inconceivable, for to have gone voluntarily with the devil would have been sin.† (γ) We must also note that all the Gospels and the best authorities‡ agree in saying that the temptation was not an inward one, but it was addressed to our Lord from without. While contemplating the course of His future ministry, our Lord appears to have had an inward struggle to decide whether He should act according to His own will, or in self-denial and submission to the will of His heavenly Father. But, though the struggle was inward, the thought which gave rise to it was addressed from without.

To these three notices may be added other statements made by the Evangelists themselves. Our Lord was alone with the wild beasts. This excludes the presence of any Evangelist. The accounts, therefore, which the Evangelists give of the temptation must have come, in the first place, from our Lord Himself. All the Evangelists, moreover, agree in placing the temptation immediately after our Lord's baptism in Jordan, and at the beginning of His ministry. What time so opportune for the machinations of the devil !

Summing up, we find that the narrative, as given by the Evangelists, is a poetical representation of an actual historical event, which our Lord gave to His disciples, of

* *Vide* Gilbert's 'Student's Life of Jesus,' p. 61.

† *Ibid.*

‡ *E.g.*, Neander, Meyer, Ebrard, Edersheim, etc.

His conflict in the wilderness with the devil at the outset of His Messianic work. Courses of action were presented to Him which He recognised as Satanic in character, and in telling His disciples of the struggles our Lord used poetical language, as was His wont—language which to them was comprehensible and easily understood. As Neander observes, 'Christ left to His disciples and the Church only a partial and symbolic account of the facts of His inner life in this preparatory epoch'; yet it was an account adapted to their practical necessities, and served to guard them against those seductions of the world which beset the path of all who would walk in the fear and nurture of God.

The individual temptations require but a brief reference. The first temptation was an attempt made by the devil to make our Lord prove His Messiahship by working a miracle to satisfy His own bodily needs. In the water of the Jordan He had had the Divine assurance of Messiahship; and here there was the temptation to throw Himself upon His own power and to doubt or forget altogether His Divine Sonship.

The second temptation was one based on a similar foundation. If our Lord's claims are right, let Him put them to the test by throwing Himself from the Temple pinnacle. So reasoned the devil. God would not forsake His Anointed One, especially in an hour such as this. The act would compel the homage of all men. To have yielded to this temptation would have been an act of presumption, one done in a false confidence only for self-aggrandisement. It would have been a sin against reason.

The last temptation concerns the method of realizing the Messianic ideal. Shall our Lord win the world by a life of pain and sorrow, and at last death, or shall He acquiesce in the lesser and more simple demand of doing homage

to 'the lord of this world,' who promises to forfeit his claims for so humble a service? The latter looked the more inviting, but our Lord came to fulfil the law and the prophets, and to give His life 'a ransom for many.'

CHAPTER III

THE BEGINNING OF THE MINISTRY

THE CALL OF THE FIRST DISCIPLES (Matt. iv. 18-22 ;
Mark i. 16-20 ; John i. 35-51).

THE Old Testament contains more than one reference to the fact that the prophets called to themselves certain men, and, after training them in the law and the history of Israel, sent them forth to carry on the work of God amongst the people. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that our Lord did the same. He chose twelve, that 'they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils.' This choice, it has been urged by some, bespeaks a lack of originality, and gives to the narrative the impress of legend.

There are some remarkable resemblances between the calls of our Lord and the calls of the prophets, but these, instead of pointing to legend as their source, or implying a servile adherence to the usages of ancient times, we may use as proofs against them. As long as He was in the world our Lord would preach the glad tidings of salvation to men, but He recognised the fact that the day was not far distant when He Himself should be taken away, and other hands and minds would be required to carry on the work He had inaugurated. These men were to be the interpreters of His goodness, and the unobstructed channels

through which He might still pour out upon men 'all His loving purpose.' A course of action such as this displays a profound sense of the needs of His kingdom and a full recognition of His Father's methods of working amongst men.

These Apostles, too, were insignificant men, and men both illiterate and simple-minded. We see them failing to free themselves from a material conception of our Lord's kingdom until the day of His death, and one and all looked to the day of the restoration of the kingdom of Israel as an earthly temporal power. In the Acts we observe their Jewish prejudice, and the stout opposition they made to the admission of the Gentiles into the primitive Church. John, years afterwards, writing an account of the vision he had when in Patmos, shows his Jewish origin, and throughout that account he displays the fiery and vengeful spirit which characterized the Old Testament times. It cannot be without significance that the man to develop and expand our Lord's earthly teaching was not found in the number of the chosen twelve, but one Paul, who had not followed our Lord when in the flesh, but had learnt to know Him through a vision at a time when the Church had gained an independent existence, and much opposition had been aroused by its growth and influence. Yet these were the men whom our Lord chose to be His close companions, and, after His decease, to carry on His work.

To many it is a source of wonder that our Lord should have selected men so untaught and unsusceptible to Divine things, and should have laboured in opposition to their worldly tendencies to fit them for their office, especially when men of much cultivation in Jewish theology were at hand, more than one of whom did attach themselves to Him at a later date. But we are justified in presupposing

that our Lord acted thus according to a special decision of His own wisdom, as He Himself testifies in Matt. xi. 25, 26: 'I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight.' Precisely because these men, destitute of all higher learning, attached themselves to Him like children, and obeyed even His slightest hints, were they best fitted to receive His Spirit with childlike devotion and confidence, and to propagate the revelation which He made to them. Everything in them was to be the growth of the new creation through our Lord's Spirit, and men who had received a complete culture elsewhere would have been ill adapted for His. They were trammelled, it is true, by their material conceptions of Divine things, but this was counterbalanced by their anxiety to learn and their childlike submission to our Lord as Master and Guide; while, on the other hand, insurmountable obstacles would have been presented in the want of submission, in the stubborn adherence to preconceived views, of men who had been trained and cultivated before.*

The accounts given us by the Evangelists of the calls addressed to the first disciples by our Lord are apparently full of discrepancies. According to John's narrative, the first disciples were led to our Lord before His return to Galilee, while the other Evangelists seem to say that it was by the shore of the Lake of Galilee, at a much later time in His ministry. Are these two separate events? If so, what need was there of two calls? It is certain from John's Gospel alone that our Lord did not take these young disciples, who were ultimately to be His Apostles, immediately into close fellowship, but left them for a while to themselves, to continue their occupations. There was a

* *Vide* Neander's 'Life of Jesus Christ.'

call to believe in Him, but, as yet, no call to forsake all and follow Him. The spiritual attraction was at work in them, and a community of disciples was forming; but a return to their homes and their toil was not at this time excluded, so that afterward a second call was necessary, which commanded them to leave all and follow Him. As Lange remarks on this incident, 'The believing disciples of the Lord, as such, were not always called to be His constant associates and messengers, and these, again, were not destined to be Apostles in the strict sense. Twelve such Apostles Jesus chose; besides these, He had a circle of seventy messengers, but the collective body of disciples at the time of His ascension contained at least 120 men.* It is, therefore, in perfect correspondence with this gradation if the first calling is distinguished from the first delegation, and this again from the setting apart of the twelve Apostles.

Strauss, endeavouring to magnify the apparent contradiction between John's narrative and the other Gospels, does so by finding in the words of our Lord, 'Follow Me' (*ἀκολουθεῖ μοι*), the 'junction of a permanent relation.' This is so, but he has not taken care to distinguish between 'the junction of a permanent relation' and 'the junction of a peculiar relation: the circumstance that the first disciples were in constant attendance on our Lord did not make them His evangelists, any more than the female disciples became evangelists, though they constantly accompanied Him.†

THE MARRIAGE IN CANA (John ii. 1-11).

On the third day after our Lord had chosen His first disciples He manifested forth His glory in the working of

* *Vide* Acts i. 15.

† *Vide* Lange's 'Life of Jesus Christ,' vol. ii., p. 17.

His first miracle. It was at a marriage, in all probability, of some relative in Cana of Galilee, for not only was our Lord present with His disciples, but Mary was there, and she in a capacity which seems to bespeak relationship. Owing, probably, to an unexpectedly large increase in the number of guests, the wine runs short, and, this predicament being observed by Mary, she whispers to her Son, 'They have no wine.' We cannot interpret this to mean that Mary expected our Lord to work a miracle and replenish the wine bowls with wine. He had never before worked a miracle, and Mary could not know He would work one on this occasion. Neither can her command to the servants be taken as implying the possibility of an immediate miracle; for if she had anticipated a manifestation of His Divine power she would in all probability have considered the help of the servants unnecessary. It was because she had ever been accustomed to lean upon her Son and turn to Him in all her difficulties that she turns to Him now, and points out the state of the feast.

The reply of our Lord to Mary's observation seems to be tinged with harshness and disrespect, and men have not been slow to call attention to it. This misconception apparently arises from our Lord's use of the word 'woman' (*γύναι*). But this word, instead of containing any harshness, is the one which was so respectful that it was addressed to the queenliest, as to Cleopatra by the Emperor Augustus,* and it was so gentle that it might be, and was, addressed to the most fondly loved, as, for instance, by our Lord to Mary Magdalene in the garden, and also to Mary when our Lord hung on the cross.

The sentence, 'What have I to do with thee?' is a needlessly strong translation, although it would be difficult to find a better. There is nothing in it approaching angry

* 'Dio. Cass. Hist.,' li. 12.

resentment at Mary's conduct, nor 'a repudiation of any claim she might have upon Him,' but only an intimation that on this occasion He must act in His own time and in His own way. It was well to break this to Mary at the beginning of His ministry, lest in the future it should lead to misunderstanding, and prove injurious to His work.

The water-pots used in the conversion of the water into wine on this occasion were chosen, no doubt, for a special reason. These pots were used only for the purpose of the Jewish rites of cleansing; they stood at the door of the house, always filled with water for washing the feet. They were put to no other use, and by using these in the working of this miracle our Lord altogether dissociated the wine made from the vine from this which He made from water. A similar precaution had apparently been taken in waiting until all the wine had failed before working the miracle, lest this miracle might be gainsaid, and it should be attributed to a trick.

Between 100 and 140 gallons* of wine were presented to the bridal pair by this miracle. Truly a royal gift! A tenth of the quantity would have been ample. Besides, would not such abundance display 'a parade of power' unworthy of the Son of God? and would it not encourage men to drink to excess? This was our Lord's wedding gift to the young pair. He can give with no niggardly hand; He gives not as a subject, but as a King. He had partaken of the juice of the vine at this feast, and with a Divine interest He repays those who have been kind to Him.

To avoid the difficulty—apparent rather than real—of our Lord providing the means of gross excess, it has been suggested that the wine, so miraculously made, was unfermented and non-intoxicating—*i.e.*, it was not wine at all—but to reason after this fashion is to reason without a founda-

* A firkin is 8 gallons.

tion. In all God's dealings with men He allows the possibility of a temptation to excess.* Everything may be thus abused, but he who resists the temptation to excess is strengthened by so doing. The 5,000 men might have been gluttonous over the loaves and fishes; the responsibility was theirs, not our Lord's.

Strauss fails to see a sufficient purpose for this miracle. 'Miracles,' he says, 'are always beneficial, because they remove a natural defect; but what our Lord is said to have done in Cana did not aim at the removal of a natural evil, but only at the reanimation of an interrupted pleasure.' The reply is furnished by Maier in his commentary on this Gospel. He points out that the same critics, to disprove the authenticity and genuineness of one miracle, bring into comparison the other miraculous narratives of the Evangelists, of which they deny collectively the objective truth. Therefore they assume a point of comparison which on their standpoint does not exist.†

We may bring this chapter to a close with a reference to Dr. von Baur's view of this miracle. He denies its historic reality, and endeavours to show that this incident must be allegory. Surely this is to understand things after a peculiar fashion; for he regards reality as so trivial that 'history vanishes at once from his view whenever he can see a conceit glimmering, while he performs a splendid counter-miracle to that of Cana—namely, that of changing the wine of evangelical reality into the water of vapid conceit.'‡ This, of course, does not hinder us from attaching an allegorical significance to this miracle so long as we maintain its historic reality.

* *Vide* Dr. Plummer on John's Gospel, in the 'Cam. Gk. Test.'

† Quoted by Lange.

‡ *Cf.* Lange's 'Life of Jesus Christ,' vol. ii., p. 22.

CHAPTER IV

OUR LORD'S EARLY MINISTRY

THE PURGING OF THE TEMPLE (John ii. 14-16).

It was most fitting that our Lord should begin His public work in Jerusalem. Here was the Temple, which was the sanctuary of Judaism and the centre of the national and religious life. He had in Cana worked the miracle of converting water into wine—an act of a semi-private character—but here in Jerusalem He performs His first public act, the purification of the Temple. It was an act of holiness rather than an act of power—one of supreme courage, and one prompted by a burning zeal for God's honour.

The time of the year was the Passover Feast, when Jerusalem was crowded with worshippers. In the Temple were to be found Jews of many nationalities, while in the court of the Gentiles were crowded the dealers in oxen, sheep, and doves, together with the changers of money. Strange paradox that they who prided themselves upon their obedience to the law and their zeal for God's glory should allow His earthly sanctuary to become a house of merchandise. The explanation for this is not far to seek: it was this very Pharisaism which was the cause of this state of things. In the same degree in which Pharisaism looked with contempt upon the Gentiles, and assessed them at a value sufficient to satisfy and fit in with its own narrow prejudices, it valued the sacrificial animals, since they had some relation to the Temple, more highly. At last, the priestly party esteemed them as the nobler of the two; the Gentile was on a level with the unclean beasts, while the sacrificial beasts served for the purpose of purification. It was, therefore, quite in accordance with the spirit of Pharisaism when the animals were allowed to expel the Gentiles from their court.

An excuse had to be framed for allowing such a condition of affairs, so that the priests and all the Temple officials might be exonerated from blame, and their zeal for the purity of the Temple worship might not be questioned. Convenience, was their excuse, and the exigencies of the Temple worship required it. Worshippers coming from long distances found it a convenience to buy their offerings on the spot, and those who had not the Temple shekel needed the services of the money-changers to supply their need. A custom so convenient could not but commend itself to the mind of the worshippers, and, at the same time, satisfied the qualms of conscience which any dealer engaged in it might have. But there was another view, which was carefully kept in the background, to take of these abuses—a view, probably, the more important of the two. Behind this traffic was a great pecuniary interest which went to enrich the pockets of the priestly party; if this traffic be interfered with, it meant a loss of no small sum in their personal gains. In opposition to this they forgot that the practice did not aid the worship of God, as it was supposed to do, but served as a hindrance to it. The poor were shamefully robbed by these extortionate dealers; excessive rates were charged by the money-changers, and thus the Temple itself was converted into a market-hall and a veritable ‘den of thieves.’

These abuses must be removed, and our Lord has no hesitation in removing them. Making a scourge of small cords, He wielded it, not against men, but against the oxen and sheep;* the tables of the money-changers were overturned and, at His command, the owners bore away the

* Lange sees in this the peculiar legality of the act. ‘Jesus drove out the cattle with the scourge, both sheep and oxen—*πάνας*—as if they were a shepherdless herd which had run into the Temple. The sellers would, of course, rush out with the cattle, and, quite as naturally, the buyers with the sellers.’

doves in their cages. Amidst all the confusion and among so many people, there was none found who dared to stay His hand or resist His will. Assured as they would be of the protection of the priesthood, not a man could resist that majestic mandate ; but without any ado they all hurriedly leave the court.

It seems almost incredible that it should have happened so. Yet 'Christ had,' as Hengstenberg observes, 'a powerful confederate in the consciences of the offenders.' The presentiment of coming disasters and the overthrow of the nation aided the impression produced by that majestic manner and irresistible word, and men felt that they were absolutely and utterly in His power. Every Hebrew prophet had spoken with authority and boldness ; and here our Lord assumed nothing more than the rôle of God's Representative amongst, and messenger to, His own nation.

Besides this cleansing of the Temple by our Lord, there was another on the eve of the day of His crucifixion, which bore many resemblances to this first. The one is recorded by John alone, while Matthew* alone refers to the other. This repetition has caused some to question the accuracy of Matthew, and to suggest that he has given us another account of the cleansing reported by John. The real difficulty seems to lie in believing that the Temple was twice cleansed. A Passover had intervened, at which our Lord was not present, between the two purifications, and the evil had evidently returned. If this evil actually recurred we are quite justified in supposing that our Lord would again drive it out.

OUR LORD AND NICODEMUS (John iii. 1-21).

While in Jerusalem many of the Jews were led to follow our Lord, and to believe in His Divine claims. The greater

* Matt. xxi.

number of these were of the poor and illiterate class ; but in Nicodemus we have a brilliant exception, for he was well versed in the law and held the coveted positions of a ruler of the Jews and a member of the Sanhedrin. In all probability, he was the first man of influence and position to believe in our Lord, and, for that reason, the authenticity and genuineness of the incident have been questioned. Neander observes that 'it was the pride and glory of the primitive Church that the new creation of Christianity began among the poor ; that the wise of this world were put to shame by the ignorant.' There was, therefore, no inducement to invent accounts of rich and influential men being drawn to our Lord, and especially when one was so distinguished a scribe as Nicodemus.

For some time past the mind of Nicodemus appears to have been occupied by doubts relating to the keeping of the law. No matter the amount of care given to the latter, there still remained something which left a void, and nothing seemed able to fill it. The demeanour and teaching of our Lord had attracted his attention, and the reports which had reached him showed him One who knew well the power of God, for even a miracle had been done by Him in the name of God. Nicodemus decides to pay Him a visit, and comes by night, lest his colleagues in the Sanhedrin should have any suspicion of him ; and there, alone with our Lord, he will propound his questions and state his difficulties.

The report of this conversation, like most of our Lord's discourses reported by John, is very dissimilar from anything we find in the writings of the other Evangelists. This dissimilarity needs a passing notice. Our Lord's discourses as found in John's narrative, it is true, are very unlike those found in the first three Gospels, but we must not exaggerate the unlikeness. The discourses are, for instance, longer and on transcendent themes ; they are not

groups of pregnant sayings, maxims or paradoxes, as in the narratives of the first three Evangelists. In them our Lord expounds the meaning and issues of His mission, and His relation to the Father who has sent Him. These discourses are, moreover, more reflective and less popular than those found in the first three Gospels.* These differences may perhaps be accounted for by the difference between the readers of John's Gospel and those of the other Gospels. John writes for those who are to some extent familiar with the chief characters and incidents of the Gospel story, while the first three Evangelists offer a narrative which will be intelligible to readers quite unacquainted with that story. Accordingly, John's narrative discloses the inner meaning of the Gospel history; it presents to men a Divine Father through a Divine Son, who has entered into humanity in order to lift men into fellowship with God. In the words of Dean Robinson, we have here 'theological interpretation, not bare narrative; typical scenes chosen for their spiritual significance, not a complete and self-contained historical record.'

There was also a social and intellectual difference between the hearers of our Lord's discourses as found recorded by John, and those to whom the discourses found in the other Gospels were addressed. The first three Evangelists give us discourses spoken among the rude and simple-minded peasants of Galilee; those found in John's narrative are mostly addressed to the Rabbis and learned people of Judæa. This fact will account for a good deal.† In the present case we have two teachers in Israel, our Lord and Nicodemus, discussing spiritual mysteries. Is it to be wondered at if they should go more deeply into the subject than was proper in public instruction?

* *Vide* Dean Robinson's 'The Study of the Gospels.'

† *Vide* Plummer on John's Gospel in 'Cam. Gk. Test.'

Nicodemus begins the conversation by acknowledging that our Lord is 'a teacher come from God.' Our Lord immediately changes the subject, and passes on to the deeper questions contained therein, and speaks of the condition of entrance into the kingdom of heaven. He tells Nicodemus that he 'must be born again' to enter that kingdom. This image of a 'new birth' was traditional in the East, and was understood among the Jews to denote the conversion of an idolater from idolatry to the true worship of Jehovah. For example, Paul applies the term 'new creation' to converts, and considers it so familiar an expression among the Jews that he never ventures to give, nor does he see the need of giving, any explanation. But Nicodemus was a Jew, and as such felt he was an *ex-officio* member of the kingdom of heaven. The need of a new birth to him was incomprehensible. All the years he had given up to the study and keeping of the law would surely obtain for him access into that kingdom. But he confounded the sphere of nature with the sphere of grace, and knew no distinction between morality and spirituality. His presumed knowledge of the Scriptures had failed to teach him this, and, not so much from irritability as from prejudice and ignorance, he asks concerning the new birth: 'How can a man be born when he is old?' Our Lord endeavours to make all things plain to him, and answers: 'Except a man be born of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.' Nicodemus had spoken of a man entering his mother's womb and being born again, but godliness is not a transmitted virtue: it can only come from the Spirit. 'That which is flesh is flesh, and that which is spirit is spirit.'

But what is the meaning of the words 'being born of water and the Holy Ghost'? The baptism of John the Baptist here comes to our aid. John in his ministry had

demanding of all men alike who came to his baptism 'repentance unto remission of sins.' He made it quite clear that until there had been repentance there could be no baptism, and that he who was baptized did not obtain repentance by the rite. He could neither confer remission of sins nor yet repentance for sins, but he sharply discriminated the baptism with water from the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Transferring this to the incident under consideration, we learn that Nicodemus was to receive both baptisms: he must show his repentance by being baptized with water, and he must receive the new life which is given through Jesus Christ by the Holy Ghost. It is a great mystery; no human means can bring it about. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, but thou canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth.' So is every one that is 'born of the Spirit.' He does not know how, but he knows it is—'old things have passed away; all things have become new.'

OUR LORD'S DISCIPLES BAPTIZE OTHERS (John iii. 22, iv. 2).

After His work in Galilee our Lord turned to Judæa, and there remained for some considerable time. The accounts we have of this time are most meagre, and furnish us with the solitary notice that our Lord was near to Salem, at Ænon, where John was still baptizing, and that His own disciples baptized there many who came to their baptism. Several questions arise in connection with this action of our Lord's disciples. Why did John the Baptist not enrol himself among the disciples of our Lord and forsake his work by the Jordan and follow Him? If John had done so he would have relinquished the Messianic service which had been specially assigned to him. He was sent to prepare the way for the founding of our Lord's kingdom, and one form of his work was that of baptizing in Jordan those who

repented and desired remission of their sins. So long as he carried out this work did he help forward the work of our Lord and prepare the nation for the reception of His claims. To be included among the chosen Twelve was not required of him, and in his life's work he did a greater and more helpful work than otherwise he could have done.

A more difficult question is : 'Why did our Lord allow His disciples to baptize close to John?' It looks as if there were opposition, and the great act of purifying was thereby divided. This act was of such significance that possibly 'ten zealous theocrats might have administered it in different parts of the land without breaking up its unity, just as now it is administered by thousands of clergy throughout the world, and everywhere has the same meaning of incorporation into the Church of Christ.'*

Besides this, we cannot but suppose that the disciples who here surround our Lord, and probably consisted of some of John's disciples, whose numbers might be increased by Jewish adherents of Jesus, were accustomed to adopt this method of preparing the way for the kingdom of Jesus Christ ; and it might be important to them to perform their old work with new joy and mental elevation in the presence of our Lord and under His authority. John had disciples to assist him in his work of preparing the way for our Lord's kingdom, and it may have been that the Lord's own disciples recognised the extent and importance of that work, and baptized as many as repented of their sins. There was not much, if any, difference in the essential significance of the two baptisms.†

John‡ has a very significant notice on this baptism by our

* Lange's 'Life of Jesus Christ,' vol. ii., p. 45.

† Lücke, in his Commentary, maintains the essential identity of John's baptism with Christ's water baptism.

‡ John iv. 2.

Lord's disciples. He says: 'Jesus baptized not, but His disciples.' Through His disciples our Lord took up John's baptism and blessed it. For Himself there was a greater baptism—viz., the baptism with the Holy Ghost.

The witness of John the Baptist to our Lord's Divine nature, as found in John iii. 27-36, needs some word of explanation before it can be said to be free from the objection that it contradicts the action of the Baptist, as narrated in Matt. xi. 2-6. John was the forerunner of our Lord and also His cousin, but this does not imply that John was not susceptible to the same feelings and influences as other men. If, therefore, we find him in one place impressing upon his disciples the claims of our Lord and the peril of not believing on Him, and yet in prison feeling impatience or despondency, or even doubt, about the position and career of our Lord, we know that this is an experience not uncommon; nor are we surprised that such an one as John should fall a victim to such an experience.

OUR LORD AND THE SAMARITAN WOMAN (John iv. 1-43).

As our Lord's work gained greater notoriety in Judæa, the more readily did the people flock to hear Him and to attach themselves to Him. This success was sure to arouse hostility among the Pharisaic party, and he therefore decided to leave Judæa and go back to Galilee. It was no act of cowardice or fear of opposition which prompted this course of action; for—as Geikie has graphically shown—the road through Samaria exposed travellers to exceptional difficulties; but because our Lord wished the Samaritans to be united in the kingdom of God with their former brethren, the Jews.

Arrived at Jacob's Well, the Lord sent away the disciples into the city to buy food while He, tired by the journey, rested by the well. As He sat, a poor Samaritan woman,*

* At this time the rich did not draw water; only the poor.

and one of not very good character, came with her pitcher to draw water. The proper hours for drawing water were 6 a.m. and 6 p.m., but a woman such as this we can well suppose would not be desirous of meeting with other females, and so she comes at noon. Here was an opportunity for the Lord to let his influence be felt in Samaria. He needed drink; this woman should draw for Him and give Him to drink. His request greatly surprised her—a Jewish rabbi to ask drink of a Samaritan woman! The Talmud tells us that ‘no rabbi is to speak with a woman, even if she be his wife, in the public street.’ We know, too, that in Judæa a bridegroom was not permitted to be alone with his bride until one hour before the marriage; while even this was thought unbecoming in Galilee. But this was not all: she was a Samaritan woman! This fact only increased her amazement. Geikie* reminds us that a Jew might be friendly with a heathen, but not with a Samaritan, and all bargains made with one were invalid. The testimony of a Samaritan could not be taken in a Jewish court, and to receive one into one’s house would bring down the curse of God. Our Lord did not possess this particularistic spirit, nor had He any regard for conventionalities, or He would not have chosen this route.† His one desire was to scatter seeds for the future among the people of this land.

Adapting His teaching to her culture, our Lord uses the water of the well as a natural illustration of the spiritual blessings which are in His power to bestow: ‘If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, “Give Me to drink,” thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water.’ The illustration awakened in her a desire to possess such gift; and, regard-

* Geikie’s ‘Life of Jesus Christ,’ vol. 523.

† The route generally chosen by Jews was through Perea.

ing it in a materialistic sense, she asked to let it be given her, so that her tasks might be diminished.

The words of our Lord, 'Thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband,' have given rise to the question, Is this allegory, or is it an historical incident? In the 'five husbands' the allegorist sees the five religions brought to Samaria by the colonists from Assyria—viz., from Babylon, Cutbah, Ava, Hamath, and Sepharvaim*—while the sixth husband is the adulterated worship of Jehovah. The allegory is nothing but a pure fiction, and if our interpreting Scripture depends upon guessing such riddles as this, we may well give up the task in despair.

Our Lord undoubtedly made the remark to the woman in a literal sense. He wished to upbraid her for her sin, and to show her a 'better way.' He could not have made use of the accidental turn which the conversation took, by the guilty consciousness of the woman, in order to appear as a prophet, but He would have felt still more bound to have developed the obscure allegory. Moreover, as Lange reminds us, 'The Samaritan people practised the different modes of idolatrous worship and the service of Jehovah simultaneously, and, though drawn from five nations, they were really seven or eight in number.' Obviously, the five husbands of this woman were successive and not simultaneous. At every turn this allegorical interpretation breaks down. Besides, there is a singular impropriety in making the heathen religions 'husbands,' while the worship of Jehovah is represented by a 'paramour.'†

As soon as the woman recognised our Lord as a prophet, she began to talk with Him upon religious subjects. He a Jew, she a Samaritan; what better subject than that great bone of contention between Jews and Samaritans—the

* *Vide* 1 Kings xvii. 24-31.

† Plummer on John's Gospel, in the 'Cam. Gk. Test.'

place in which God can be rightly worshipped? Objectors have been found who say that this woman could not have been interested in religious matters, nor have cared anything about them. Does not this objection show a gross ignorance of human nature in those who urge it? Do not irreligious people exhibit a strong liking for religious questions and arguments nowadays? The implied answer to this question will be sufficient to refute such an objection.

Two difficulties which arise in this connection require our attention before we leave this incident. In Matt. x. 5 our Lord forbade His disciples to go into 'the way of the Gentiles, or to enter into any city of the Samaritans.' Here we find Him doing both these things which He forbade His disciples to do; for this woman was both a Gentile and a Samaritan. A closer look at the text shows that what our Lord forbade them to do was to undertake a mission to the Samaritans, until the lost sheep of the house of Israel had been sought after. In this case there was no organized mission to the Samaritans; just a conversation about spiritual things with a woman.

Dr. Plummer, in his commentary on John's Gospel, reminds us of the other difficulty. In Acts viii. 5 we are told that, owing to the persecution which was waged against the Christian Church in Jerusalem—during which Stephen was stoned—all the disciples were scattered abroad throughout Judæa and Samaria. Philip visited Samaria, and there preached Jesus Christ and worked miracles in His name. 'How could Philip,' it is asked, 'go and convert the Samaritans if our Lord had already done so?' Supposing, what is not certain, that our Lord and Philip went to the same town, can we suppose that in two days our Lord perfected Christianity in Samaria, so as to leave nothing for a preacher to do afterwards? The Samaritans were but like the rest of men, and many, finding our Lord to be a very

38 SOME DIFFICULTIES IN THE LIFE OF OUR LORD

different Messiah from what they anticipated, would undoubtedly fall away. The command in Matthew may also have been occasioned by merely temporary reasons.*

CHAPTER V

OUR LORD'S EARLY MINISTRY (*continued*)

THE HEALING OF THE NOBLEMAN'S SON (John iv. 43-54).

OF the many miracles of our Lord, three only were effected at a distance—viz., the healing of the nobleman's son, the healing of the Syro-Phœnician's daughter, and the healing of the centurion's servant. In many respects the first of these miracles resembles the third—so much so that even Irenæus and, of late, Ewald have identified them. But while the resemblances are striking, the differences are sufficient to make identification quite impossible. Not only are the scenes of the two miracles different, that being in Capernaum, this in Cana; but, more conclusive still, the inner kernals of the two narratives are different. Moreover, we have here a nobleman, a Jew, there a centurion, a heathen; here the malady is a fever, there a case of paralysis; here the petitioner is the father of the child, there a master pleads for his servant. These notices render identification impossible.

John tells us that the petitioner at Cana was a βασιλικός. This could mean either 'one of the king's party—a royalist,' or 'a king's officer,' or, with a narrower significance, he would be merely a 'courtier';† but its precise meaning is not known. This man hastens to Cana from Capernaum to urge our Lord to come down to his house and heal his son. He evidently was ignorant of our Lord's vocation, for he ex-

* Cf. Luke ix. 52-56.

† Vide Trench on the Miracles, p. 127.

pected that He would leave His present circle of operation to effect a cure of a physical nature. But he must learn that our Lord could be no bodily helper for any until a spiritual relation had been developed between the person needing help and Himself. Least of all could He be at the bidding of a person of rank, who might possibly think that he could venture to make use of Him, on any emergency, as a wonder-working physician. Our Lord's observation on this request was, 'Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.' But this chilling observation had a double purpose: it was to teach the nobleman that our Lord's physical gifts were not His greatest gifts, and, at the same time, there must also be a spiritual relation begun and developed between the suppliant and the Giver. These physical gifts are testimonies of His claims, and serve, not as mere displays of power, but as a means of establishing and perfecting faith in the Divine Worker.

Then followed our Lord's answer to the nobleman's petition; but how different from what he hoped for! An impostor would have courted the friendship and influence of so great a man as this. But our Lord determines that the same condition must exist here as in every other case, and, to test its reality, He says: 'Go; thy son liveth.'

The narrative closes with the difficult expression, 'This is again the second miracle that Jesus did when He was come out of Judæa into Galilee.' Marcus Dods observes on this expression that John may only have intended to call attention more distinctly to the place where the miracle was wrought; or it is just probable that he may have wished to warn readers of the first three Gospels that our Lord had not yet begun the Galilean ministry with which these Gospels open. Chrysostom sees yet another cause for inserting this verse in John's narrative. He says: 'The word "second" is not added without cause, but to exalt

yet more the praises of the Samaritans, by showing that even when the second miracle had been wrought they who beheld it had not yet reached so high as those who had not seen one.' The meaning is perhaps best stated by Bishop Ryle in his 'Expository Thoughts on St. John's Gospel.' He points out that our Lord had worked no miracle in Galilee before this one, excepting that of turning water into wine at Cana. It is certain that He wrought other miracles between this and the first miracle in Cana, but probably these earliest miracles were wrought in Judæa, although we have no record of them except in the second chapter of John's Gospel.

THE HEALING OF THE DEMONIAK AT CAPERNAUM
(Mark i. 21-28 ; Luke iv. 33-37).

Before entering upon a study of this miracle and those of a similar nature, it is necessary to make a few prefatory remarks on the subject of demoniacal possession. To be content to identify demoniacal possession with lunacy, epilepsy, or melancholia is to answer the inquiry without taking into consideration the many fragmentary notices of demoniacs and demoniacal possession found in Holy Scripture. There was no doubt a weakening of the will and a substratum of disease, which in many cases helped on the worst evil, but the Evangelists are careful to distinguish between the one and the other. For instance, in His commission to the twelve our Lord distinguished between them, while physical affections are associated with demoniacal possession—and not identified with it—in Matt. ix. 32, xii. 22, and Mark ix. 18. Our Lord's language in regard to all these cases, as recorded by the Evangelists, shows Him to consider the demoniacs as subjects of an alien power, and He addresses them as distinct from the man : 'Hold thy peace, and come out of him.'

On the other hand, demoniacal possession must not be identified with moral degradation. The demoniac was rather 'one of the unhappiest, but not, of necessity, one of the guiltiest, of our race.' 'So far from this,' says Trench, 'the chief representatives and organs of Satan—false prophets and antichrists—are never contemplated as such.' In such men there is no cry for deliverance nor any desire for redemption; the heart has been hardened, and the will has lost its power of asserting itself. We shall possibly find the primary cause of this malady in a weak yielding to sensual lusts, for by this the will was weakened to such a degree that, though not crushed entirely, it was powerless to do more than cry for liberty. Buckle shows that there have been always ebb and flow in the currents of national history, and such we know to be true of moral history. In the days of our Lord spiritual forces were at the ebb. 'That whole period was "the hour and power of darkness"—of a darkness which then, as just before the dawn of a new day, was the thickest.'

In the synagogue of Capernaum our Lord comes into contact with a man 'with an unclean spirit.' It is not the only case of this kind which our Lord meets with, but what distinguishes it the most is the testimony which the evil spirit bears to our Lord and His refusal to accept it. 'Let us alone. What have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God,' says the spirit. 'Be muzzled and come out of him,' is the Lord's stern reply. How are we to interpret this? What prompted this cry? and what should make our Lord appear to refuse a title which was rightly His? Theophylact and Grotius understand this cry as one of abject and servile fear, that with fawning and flatteries would fain avert from itself the doom which, with our Lord's presence in the world, must evidently be near; whilst Jerome likens this

exclamation to the cry of the fugitive slave, dreaming of nothing but stripes and torments, when he encounters unawares his well-known lord, and now seeking by any means to deprecate his anger.* Both of these explanations have in them much to commend them; but a more probable one is that which sees in the cry of the unclean spirit an effort of fiendish malice to compromise the Saviour's character, and bring the truth into suspicion and discredit, as though in league with the spirits of evil. If this be so, our Lord's acceptance of such an acknowledgment would have tended to discredit His mission and to damage His work; therefore He rightly refuses such a testimony as the unclean spirit utters. He does not deny the truth of the words, but only refuses to mar and traverse His life's work by receiving attestation to the truth of His claims from the agent of the 'father of lies.'

After the devil had been rebuked came the command to go: 'Hold thy peace, and come out of him.' Was the devil obedient to this command or no? The manner of the man's last paroxysm would appear to say 'No,' but it would seem almost incredible that this could be so. In truth, this command of silence was obeyed. While in possession the devil used the possessed man's organs of speech, but when he left the man he spake no more; there was nothing but a cry. The Lord forbade speech. 'This cry was nothing but an inarticulate utterance of rage and pain.'

Neither is there any contradiction between Luke and Mark in the report they give of the last paroxysm. Luke is careful to say that the devil, having thrown him down, 'came out of him, having done him no hurt'; whilst Mark, on the other hand, describes him as 'tearing him.' The Greek word† used (*σπαράξαι*) should be rendered in

* Jerome, Com. on Matt. ix.

† Mark i. 26.

the passivé 'to be convulsed,' and is so used by Galen and all medical writers. It could hardly here mean 'laceration,' but simply 'to be thrown into convulsions.' No permanent injury was probably done to him, but what harm the devil could do, that, in anger and malice, he did. Being compelled by the authority of our Lord to depart, the devil would injure him as far as he was able to do so.

● THE HEALING OF THE LEPER (Matt. viii. 2-4; Mark i. 40-45; Luke v. 12-16).

It was on the next day, probably in the synagogue, that our Lord gave a new and striking manifestation of His power in the cure of the leper.

Luke, the physician, with his customary medical exactness, tells us that this leper was one of no common kind, but that he was at the last stage of it—he was full of leprosy (*πλήρης λέπρας*). How great the mistake, then, to talk of our Lord's words as a mere declaration of ceremonial purity to one who was already far advanced towards cure! The leper asked our Lord to cure him as an evidence of His goodwill, and it is described as being performed by Him in this sense, and in as short a space of time as it took to ask the remedy. But how has this man managed to find his way to Christ, and to ask Him to cure his leprosy?

From its loathsomeness, leprosy, as might reasonably be expected, separated those afflicted with it from society, and rendered them a terror to all who met, or came near, them. In Lev. xiii. 45, we find the injunction laid down, 'The leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, "Unclean, unclean."' Here, then, are four unmistakable indications which would serve as sufficient deterrent to any wayfarer or unwary person that might, through ignorance or inadvertence, approach the leprous

person. From other passages of Holy Scripture we learn that they were not only separated from intercourse with others, but that they dwelt in a separate house, companied together, and were cut off from their nearest relatives and dearest friends. How far, exactly, these unfortunates were excluded from intercourse with other men it is impossible to say; for although the strictest precautionary measures were taken, a place was set aside for them in the synagogues.* This fact throws light on some difficult expressions found in this narrative, and explains how this man managed to get into the presence of our Lord. To be in the same building with the Lord, however, was not sufficient: he must bring himself into evidence, and approach so near as to be within reach of Him. To shout at a distance, amid so great a noise, was useless; besides which, his natural powers may have become so enfeebled that scarcely a sound could at any time be heard. Defying the law of limitation, and determined to dare or die, he broke through the *cordon sanitaire*, and fell on his face prostrate before Jesus, saying, 'Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.' There is no questioning here of the power, nothing of unbelief—for in the use of the word 'Lord' there is implied a belief in His power—but only a doubting of His willingness to exercise the ability on his behalf. This doubt can last only for a moment; for, moved with compassion, Jesus put forth His hand and touched him, and said, 'I will, be thou clean.'

Trench has shown, in his notes on this miracle, that leprosy was not contagious from one person to another. Whilst a leper might transmit it to his children, or the mother of the leper's children might take it from him, it is generally agreed, by those who have looked closest into the matter, that the sickness was incommunicable, by ordinary

* Cf. Weiss's 'Life of Christ,' vol. ii., p. 163.

contact from one person to another. In the eyes of a Jew, however, the touch of a leper made him unclean, and ceremonial defilement was incurred. Our Lord's action has been interpreted in this way, and He is regarded as having defiled Himself according to the Levitical statute. There is a surprising theory put forward which states that, when Jesus could no more openly enter into a city, it was because the leper had disobediently published what implied His ceremonial defilement.* Lange seems to adopt this theory, and says: 'In order to occasion no disturbance in the social relations of the city by the Levitical scruples which the law of purification brought with it, Jesus turned back and sought a desert place, perhaps in order to perform a sort of Levitical quarantine, not according to the spirit of the law, but according to the interpretation which might be put upon it by Levitical casuists.' Dr. Chadwick rightly takes exception to this view, and looks upon it as insinuating that 'our Lord was one to violate the law by stealth.' The people themselves, at all events, did not look upon this retirement as a sort of Levitical quarantine; for they thronged to Him from all quarters to seek His aid, and would undoubtedly not have done so if to them He was ceremonially defiled. That touch of our Lord must be viewed in another light. The law of impurity was, in fact, an expression of human frailty; but He, by that touch, showed Himself 'Lord of the law,' and exempt from its ritualistic restrictions. There was here no destroying the law by violating its commands—for the man must go and offer for his cleansing 'the things which Moses commanded'—but rather He showed Himself superior to it, and ultimately repealed it by fulfilling it.

But why command him 'to say nothing to any man'? This is important as being the first intimation of our Lord's

* Quoted by Dr. Chadwick in his volume on St. Mark in 'The Expositor's Bible.'

unwillingness to allow public attention to be diverted from His teaching to miracles, the purport of which would be but partially understood. Many answers have been given to this question. Chrysostom saw in it a desire on Christ's part to teach the avoidance of boasting and of ambition to His followers. Beza views it as a prohibition spoken for the benefit of the people and not of the man, and thinks the great concourse of people who would be drawn to Him to witness His miracles would, on the publication of this miracle, be still further increased, and so would not allow sufficient opportunity for teaching. It might have been lest the enmity of Christ's foes should be prematurely aroused by the fame of His mighty works. The explanation of Grotius is the one generally held as most satisfactory: lest the report of the miracle might outrun the man, and the priest, through ill-will or envy, refuse to pronounce him cleansed, and deny that the man had ever been a leper. If this be so, we can account for the strong language of Mark, who says, 'He straitly charged him, and forthwith cast him out.' No time was to be lost; his errand required him to hasten, lest the report of his cure should outrun him. The leper, however, lost what might have been his opportunity and blazed abroad the matter, and put our Lord's foes on their guard. To gain the priestly absolution would be a testimony against the people, because of their unbelief in not acknowledging His Messiahship, notwithstanding all His mighty works. It would be the official proof of His Divine powers, and corroborative evidence of the validity of His claims. We are left to conclude that this 'testimony' was denied Him and His work was hindered; for 'He could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places.' Still, something could be done, for—according to Matthew—great multitudes followed Him from all parts of Palestine.

THE HEALING OF ONE SICK OF THE Palsy (Matt. ix. 2-8;
Mark ii. 1-12; Luke v. 17-26).

After an interval of some days spent in unfrequented places the Lord is again back in Capernaum, 'His own city.' The place that gave Him birth was Bethlehem, that in which He was brought up Nazareth, but that which had Him continually inhabiting it was Capernaum,* therefore rightly called His own city. Soon the report was spread throughout the city that Jesus was back in the house, and 'straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them.' But what house was this in which Jesus stayed on this occasion? It could be either Peter's house, or, possibly, simply a house of some other friend. The whole circumstances connected with this miracle seem rather to urge us to the opinion that it was a house of a humble character, probably used as an inn, one to which He frequently resorted. This humble abode was soon filled to overflowing by the crowds that gathered to hear and see Him, so much so that even the door was surrounded, and many were unable to gain near access to the Lord. Whilst the crowd is still intent on gaining admission, if possible, and increasing in numbers, a paralytic, laid upon a bed and carried by four friends, appears on the outskirts. If one man cannot get near the Lord, much less four, with a helpless invalid; so, uncovering the roof, and breaking it up, 'they let down the bed whereon the sick of the palsy lay' into the midst before Jesus. This act calls for some explanation. Dr. Thomson, in his 'The Land and the Book,' says: 'In order to make the method adopted on that occasion more intelligible, we must banish from our minds every form of European or American house. Those of Capernaum, as is evident from the ruins in this

* Cf. Chrysostom's 'Homilies on St. Matthew.'

neighbourhood, were, I suppose, like those in the modern villages, low, with flat roofs, easily reached by a stairway from the yard or court. Those who carried the paralytic . . . ascended to the roof, removed so much as was necessary, and let down their patient through the aperture. Examine one of these houses, and you will see that the thing is natural and easy to be accomplished. The roof is only a few feet above the floor, and by stooping down and holding the corners of the couch—merely a thickly-padded quilt, like those used at present in this region—the sick man could have been let down without any ropes or cords. And this, I suppose, was done. The whole was the extemporaneous device of plain peasants, accustomed to open the roofs of their houses and let down grain, straw, and other articles, as they still do in this country.

‘The only difficulty in this explanation is to understand how they could break up the roof without sending down such a shower of dust as to incommode our Lord and those around Him. I have seen roofs thus opened in Lebanon, and there was always more dust than is agreeable ; but dust and earth are not dangerous.

‘The materials now used in the construction of roofs are beams placed about three feet apart, across which short sticks are arranged close together, and covered with a thickly-matted thorn-bush called “bellân.” Over this is spread a coat of stiff mortar, and above that marl or earth. Now, it is easy to remove any part without injuring the rest. No objection, therefore, would be made on this score by the owners of the house. They had merely to scrape back the earth from a portion of the roof . . . take up the thorns and short sticks, and let down the couch between the beams, at the very feet of Jesus. The end achieved, they could speedily restore the roof as before. I have the impression, however, that the covering—at least, of the “lewân”—was

not made of earth, but of materials more easily taken up. It may have been merely of coarse matting, like the walls and roofs of Turkish huts ; or it may have been made of boards, or even stone slabs (and such I have seen), that could be quickly removed. All that is necessary, however, for us to know is that the roof is flat, low, easily reached, and easily opened, so as to let down the couch of the sick man ; and all these points are rendered intelligible by an acquaintance with modern houses in the villages of Palestine.* This lengthy quotation will make quite clear how the incident took place, and accords with the graphic description given by Mark in his Gospel.

No clearer evidence of faith could our Lord expect to gain from any. He and those around Him with their own eyes had seen the evidences of the faith of these men, and at once the gracious pardon is pronounced : ' Son (or child), thy sins be forgiven thee.' The faith which is thus shown is not restricted to the men who bear him, but is found, too, in the invalid. They show their faith by their act—the invalid by allowing himself to be let down, and the object of that act. They were not deterred by difficulties nor by the fear of the angry looks of those in the room when the roof was uncovered ; but their faith knew no barriers, and now they await the answer which the Lord alone is able to give.

It must be a moment of suspense to those faithful five as they wait for the cure to be effected ; nor is their suspense diminished when the scribes and Pharisees—critical, sceptical, and malicious—attract the attention of Jesus, and delay that cure for yet a few moments. The thoughts of these hostile onlookers are not hidden from Him, nor can they be allowed to pass unnoticed. Such thoughts are shown by the interchange of glances of the

* *Vide* 'The Land of the Book,' by W. M. Thomson, D.D., vol. ii.

scribes who are present, and the look of angry disapproval on their faces.

‘When Jesus perceives in His Spirit that they so reason within themselves, He says unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?’

And on this first conviction there follows a second : ‘Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee ; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?’ Our Lord had hastened, not to heal the visible body, but that which is invisible, the soul. To claim such power was either blasphemy or an evidence of Divinity, but their minds were prejudiced, and they would not admit the possibility of the latter. God reserves to Himself the power of pardon. Jesus in His own name and on His own authority claims to bestow forgiveness ; therefore they said, He makes Himself equal with God, and is guilty of blasphemy.

Our Lord’s question, as Maclear points out, is one which was clearly meant to accommodate itself to the query latent in their minds. He asks not, ‘Which is easier, to forgive sins or to raise the paralytic?’ but ‘Which is easier, to claim this power or to claim that?—to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise and walk?’ as He had already said to the impotent man of Bethesda.* In truth, it was not easier to say, ‘Thy sins are forgiven,’ as Jesus says those words, for to say they implied the cure of the soul ; but in order to convince the scribes of His power to heal both body and soul, He adds the words, ‘Arise, and walk.’ Such language bids them infer that the inner work of forgiveness had as surely followed the first words as the outward and visible result followed the command to ‘Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk.’

But it is asked, ‘Why did Christ, here, not follow the order of His other miracles of healing?’ In other instances

* John v. 8.

He heals first and then forgives; here the forgiveness precedes the cure.' Trench* replies: 'In the sufferer's own conviction there existed so close a connection between his sin and his sickness that the bodily healing would have been scarcely intelligible to him, would have hardly brought home to him the sense of the benefit, unless in his conscience he had been also set free; perhaps he was incapable even of receiving the benefit till the message of peace had been spoken to his spirit.'† To this should be added our Lord's desire to prove conclusively His claim to forgive sins. Having drawn their attention to Himself, and aroused their anger and malice by His offer of pardon to the paralytic, He by a miracle will show Himself Lord over the body, as well as over the soul. The miracle was the visible proof of His ability to heal the body, and further attested the right and power to do that which, in its very nature, lies beyond visible proof. The removing of the punishment as such was the remitting of the sin. He that could go so far in the cure no doubt could perfect it.

THE CALL OF MATTHEW (Matt. ix. 9; Mark ii. 13, 14;
Luke v. 27, 28).

'Immediately after this cure,' says Lange, 'Jesus again helped another man to walk.' For He went forth by the seaside, and, after He had taught and dismissed the multitude, He called upon the publican Matthew, whilst sitting at the receipt of custom, to follow Him. The Evangelists who record the incident are very brief in their statements, but even these brief notices are not free from difficulties. At the outset we might ask, How is it that Matthew has two names? Mark and Luke speak of him as Levi, whilst the first Evangelist designates him as Matthew. We may, perhaps, conjecture that our Lord gave Levi a new name

* Trench on the Miracles.

† Cf. James v. 14, 15, for an interesting parallel.

when receiving Him amongst His disciples, just as He had with Simon and others. 'Or perhaps He named him Matthew,' says Lange, 'because he was come to Him, above the others, as a gift of God. . . . When the second and third Evangelists related the calling of Matthew, it was likely that they should assign to him his earlier name, as it was reported to them, because it might be of interest to the Church. But Matthew loved best to call himself by the new name which the Lord had given him.' But, besides that, in his Christian modesty he dwells too little upon himself to mention his earlier name, or to bring out so prominently as the other Evangelists what we know took place in connection with himself.

Whilst sitting at his desk in the Custom-house at Capernaum, collecting the tolls of the lake and duties on exports and imports, Matthew received the call to become a disciple of Christ and to 'follow' Him. Immediately the invitation was accepted, and he arose, 'left all, and followed Him.' This conduct must be explained, for it appears almost incredible that he should arise and follow the Lord unless he had previously heard of Him. We venture to say in reply that undoubtedly he knew the Lord. But if so, how could he have gone back to his business, which was admittedly a bad one, as he appears to have done? Our Lord was no doubt known to Matthew before his call to 'follow' Him; some reports of His teaching and attitude towards all men alike must have reached him, and have exerted a strong influence upon him. He may even have seen our Lord, and joined in the crowds which flocked to Him, in order to catch His words and to witness His mighty works. But whatever else he had heard of Him, he had not yet received a call to become a disciple. This was the first call, and at once he forsook all, and returned no more to his detested and unpatriotic business.

As Luke informs us, the love of Matthew towards Jesus was not satisfied with forsaking all and following Him, but, as a further evidence of it, he gave a great feast in his house in honour of his distinguished Guest. To this feast were invited all Matthew's old friends and associates—'publicans and sinners'—an offensive, unrighteous crowd, it is true, but one composed of men who already were fallen from Pharisaical Temple righteousness, and were, on that account, more amenable to our Lord's doctrine and dealing. But does not the conduct of our Lord here oppose the command later laid down by Paul*—'I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat'? Chrysostom anticipated this difficulty, and pointed out that, in the first place, it is not quite clear whether Paul addresses this charge to teachers or to brethren. Again, these companions of Matthew were not yet of those who had become brethren. (The word 'brother' was used before the name 'Christian' was accepted by the members of the Church.) And, besides, Paul commands with respect to those 'brethren' who continue to walk disorderly, whereas these present before our Lord had now ceased, and were willing to listen to the message of salvation. To the Pharisees and scribes great offence was given through accepting this invitation, and, meeting with our Lord's disciples, and desiring to discredit Him in their opinion, they accuse Him, and ask, 'Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?' The query is accurately reported to our Lord, when boldly He replies: 'They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice.' But what can this mean, since the law was still in force, and Christ had not yet died nor fulfilled it?

* *Vide* 1 Cor. v. 11.

The fact is, our Lord here points out that He was not the transgressor of the law, but that they were the transgressors. The purpose of the law was to bring men to the Father, and our Lord was but taking His share in that work. The Pharisees themselves did not even keep the law; for they sinned through their want of mercy for these 'outcast and guilty ones,' so that they could not be called advocates of the law. But now God desires mercy, and, whilst He does not reject sacrifice, will only accept it when accompanied by mercy. The publicans erred through their neglect of the sacrificial worship, but brought a more acceptable sacrifice—that of a humble and contrite heart, which God will not despise. Thus did the Lord turn aside the reproach of His having eaten with publicans and sinners. There is another question, this time put direct to our Lord, that must be answered ere He leaves that feast, for the disciples of John, joining with the Pharisees, ask, 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but Thy disciples fast not?' The mission of John the Baptist was to prepare the way for, and so help on, our Lord's work, but to find his disciples descending so far as to join with the Pharisees in reproaching the Lord for questionable conduct makes us ask, How can this be? Such a combination we have not met with before. The rigorous asceticism of both parties offered various points of contact between them, and may have served as sufficient ground for uniting them in one common cause. But this was not all; more potent reasons still are not far to seek. John was in prison, and though visits were permitted by his own disciples, they were probably not allowed to live with him. These visits might be frequent, but they would be necessarily short, so that they would have much more time to hear and see Jesus than when John enjoyed his liberty. The first thing they would expect Jesus to do would be that at once an effort should

be set on foot and prosecuted with all haste to liberate John from Machærus. If such an effort were made, His disciples would gladly join in it and do what they could; but when our Lord still works on in His old lines the people flock to hear Him and exult in Him, and He Himself appears to forget that John the Baptist is no longer in the world; and when, besides, the Lord seemed to be drawing to Himself great crowds, and actually feasting with publicans, whilst in their opinion it was rather the time for fasting and mourning for their imprisoned master, the disciples of John were offended and irritated at Him, and showed their indignation by joining with the Pharisees. Maclear suggests that 'perhaps this feast of Matthew's took place on one of their weekly fasts.' At a later date we know that Christ's higher spiritual life was viewed as being in opposition to the standard of righteousness adopted by the disciples of John, and they not only broke with Jesus, but with His Church.

The question, as put to the Lord by them, is soon answered, and, by means of wine-skins and patches in garments, He illustrated His answer, and showed the fallacy in their question. John had spoken of Jesus Christ as the Bridegroom.* Our Lord accepts the name, and identifies Himself with the bridegroom. 'As long as the bridegroom is with them, they (*i.e.*, the children of the bridechamber) cannot fast.' The answer was obvious. The friends of a bridegroom can only rejoice, and our Lord's disciples were present as friends of the great Bridegroom, who now awaits His Bride.

THE RAISING OF THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS (Matt. ix. 18-26; Mark v. 21-43; Luke viii. 40-56).

Space forbids us from treating this incident in detail; but it is sufficient for our purpose to face the difficulties

* John ii. 29.

found in it, and to see if they can be removed. The first difficulty springs out of the apparently conflicting statements of the first three Evangelists regarding the plea of Jairus addressed to our Lord. Matthew* reports the plea as 'My daughter is even now dead ; but come and lay Thy hand upon her, and she shall live.' Mark has it with the important variation, 'My little daughter lieth at the point of death';† whilst Luke gives, 'He had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying.'‡ These variations have been thought by some so important—Storr, for example—that they have supposed two different cases in which Christ raised a little maiden from the dead : whilst others have used these divergencies as arguments to discredit the whole incident. Even an elementary knowledge of men is sufficient to acquaint us with their ways and methods when in great trouble. They do and say things of which they are scarcely aware, and most certainly would not say or do in their calmer moments. Here was a man in great trouble. It was his only child, and her sickness had now reached such a height that he scarcely knew what to say or do. By the time he reached our Lord she may have died, but when he left her the little life seemed so quickly to be ebbing away that all hope seemed to have gone of a recovery, save that which could be supplied by a miracle from the hands of the great Miracle-Worker. At such times men augment their own evils by their conflicting reports, and say something more than they really know to be true in order to attract the sympathy of those whom they are beseeching. So this man now says, 'She is dying,' and afterwards, 'She is dead'; all of which shows his grief and despairing uncertainty, and bespeaks his earnestness in his errand to Jesus. His request is acceded to, and, with the disciples, the Lord goes with him to the house where the maid was lying. Great lamentation and wailing greet

* Matt. ix. 18.

† Mark v. 23.

‡ Luke viii. 42.

His ear ; for already the hired minstrels have assembled for the funeral, and all is confusion and noise. How incongruous is such a din, and how great a farce, is quickly seen ; for at His words, intended to comfort and cheer, 'The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth,' their wailing and beating of the breast gives place to laughter of the coarsest and most profane kind. The words of our Lord had evidently been understood literally, either through ignorance or malice, and He, who would point out the hollowness and unreality of such empty form, is contemptuously treated as a nincompoop, or even as a sycophant. Neander, Hase, Olshausen, Schleiermacher, and others have joined with this derisive company in attributing a literal meaning to our Lord's words. To do so is to deny any resuscitation of the dead on this occasion, and to contradict the spirit and letter of the whole narrative, and this they prefer to do rather than to accept it as a miracle of this sort.

If here there was no raising from the dead, then it must have been a kind of trance,* or sleep, which needed the life-giving touch of our Lord to recall the maiden from it. But Jairus would not have needed to summon the Great Physician merely to awake his daughter out of sleep. Besides which, the words used as encouragement to Jairus, when the message came of his daughter's death, would undoubtedly have been different if no actual death had taken place. Attention should also be drawn to the fact that our Lord uses exactly the same language concerning Lazarus, but goes on to add that He had not spoken of natural sleep, for 'Lazarus is dead.' To speak of death as a sleep is an image common to all languages and nations, but the reality of death is not thereby denied, only the fact

* If it must be taken literally, it would be sleep merely, and not a trance. Von Gerlach acknowledges that Luke gives it as his view that she was dead ; but such a view of the Evangelist, and of all the Evangelists, we hold for undoubted testimony.

is assumed that death will be followed by a resurrection, as sleep is by an awakening. In this case such language is used to console the father and other relatives, and to strengthen their faith in Him.

Then comes the difficulty about the exclusion of some of the disciples, and all the mourners, save the parents of the child. Strauss finds it difficult to discover a reason for this, and says 'that a greater number of spectators would have been physically or psychologically an impediment to the resuscitation can only be said on the supposition that the event was a natural one.' If, moreover, we admit the reality of the miracle, 'the exclusion of the disciples can only be sought in the want of fitness in the excluded parties.' That scorners and mockers should be excluded need occasion no surprise. Such a miracle was beyond their ability to understand, and the glory of it lies in power and not in pomp. Their presence, too, was inappropriate and superfluous. They had come to mourn for the dead ; but the damsel was not dead, only asleep, before Him who has power over death. There was to be no funeral ; for the dead shall rise and live by His word. More than this, the frame of mind displayed by them showed no promise of the tone and temper of spirit which became the witnesses of so holy a work : they shall not see these things ; pearls shall not be cast before them. The exclusion of some of the disciples is another question ; this is the first time we hear of 'an election within the election,' but not the only time. Here it can be explained as taking place for the sake of the little maid, 'whose tender grace of unconscious maidenhood should not, in its hour of reawakened vitality, be the centre of a gazing circle. He kept with Him the deeply reverential and loving, the ripest Apostles and the parents of the child, since love and reverence are ever the conditions of real insight.'*

* *Vide* Dean Chadwick on Mark in 'The Expositor's Bible.'

The incident closes with the somewhat perplexing charge addressed to the parents—namely, ‘that they should tell no man what was done.’ We have met the same charge before ; but the reasons for it being given must be different according to the occasion.

Here the charge is rendered the more perplexing by the fact that not only were five persons present as witnesses of the miracle, but a great number knew that the child was dead, and that by our Lord's agency, or in some way connected with Him, she had been restored to life. Trench understands it as ‘an expression on our Lord's part of His desire to check that moral effervescence, that agitation of men's spirits, which a dwelling on the miracles might so easily have occasioned, and which might, at this period of His ministry, have proved so serious a hindrance to it.’* Another explanation offered is ‘that our Lord did this to prevent their giving Him the false reputation of having done a miracle in this case—false because He had restored the maiden in an entirely natural way from a death that was only apparent.’ Had this been so, our Lord certainly would have explained Himself more definitely. He would have told them, in that case, how to report the matter, not that they should not report it at all. But He could not have wished that the event should be otherwise regarded than as a work of Divine power, and the prohibition was doubtless made in view of circumstances, especially in view of the dispositions of the people.

THE WOMAN WITH THE ISSUE OF BLOOD (Matt. ix. 20-22 ; Mark v. 24-34 ; Luke viii. 43-48).

We turn next to the miracle which occurred on the way to the raising of Jairus' daughter from the dead—the healing of a woman with an issue of blood. The incident is

* Trench on the Miracles, p. 201.

recorded for us by the first three Evangelists, but Mark and Luke give us the more detailed accounts. In that crowd which followed the Master down to Jairus' house was 'a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years.' The rest were curious to see our Lord work a miracle, whilst she was only desirous that one should be worked in her. Her painful and weakening malady, as Von Ammon observes, not only endangered her health and her life, but was also a positive ground for divorce, and laid her under the obligation of avoiding every public assembly. She had spent all her means on physicians, but, instead of finding any cure, she only grew worse. There was also the painful fact that she was ceremonially unclean. By the Levitical law she had to be 'put apart, and whosoever toucheth her shall be unclean.'* Everything seemed to conspire against her and to increase her misery, but now, diseased and destitute, poor and wretched, she tries the only means she has left untried. She has still a woman's modesty and feelings, and her regard for the law makes her hesitate and seems to forbid her; but if, perhaps stealthily, she can obtain the cure, better so than continue to live on in this now almost unbearable condition. She had heard of Jesus as One who effected cures and conferred health by a touch, but such a cure could never be hers; for the Great Physician could not grant her request without making Himself unclean. Accordingly, she conceived the idea of stealing a cure; and thought within herself, 'If I may but touch the hem of His garment I shall be whole.' With the strength of despair she forced her way till she came behind Jesus, and touched one of the tassels which was fastened to a corner of His garment. The law† required that at each of the four corners of the mantle should be tied a tassel, bound with thread of blue—the

* Lev. xv. 19.

† Num. xv. 38 *et seq.*

colour of heaven, and so a type of revelation. One of the four tassels hung over the shoulder at the back, and this was the one which the woman probably touched. As Dean Farrar has remarked, 'the quasi-sacredness of the tassels may have fostered her impulse to touch the one that hung in view.' Her view of our Lord's power to cure was undoubtedly a superstitious one, but as soon as she touched she was cured of her malady. Not by the power of His will, but by a certain magical influence and virtue which dwelt in Him and emanated from Him did He effect these cures, she thought. But soon she shall know the whole truth, and carry away even a greater cure still.

No sooner is the cure a fact than our Lord turns round and asks, 'Who was it that touched Me?' The crowd press on Him on every side, so that the disciples, with presumptuous impetuosity, reply, 'Thou seest the multitude thronging Thee, and sayest Thou, Who touched Me?' The question may seem absurd, but again He affirms the fact. 'Somebody hath touched Me; for I perceive that virtue is gone out of Me.' 'Many throng Him, but only one touches Him,' says St. Augustine. This brings us to the difficulty. Did our Lord really know that this woman had touched Him or not? If He did, was His question consistent with absolute truth? If He did not know, must not the cure have been a completely material one, and without the full consent of our Lord's will?

Nearly every theologian is of the opinion that here was no unconscious or involuntary cure. An involuntary cure of such a sort appears as completely material as an electric fluid, which, on the body filled with it being touched, issues forth upon that which touches it.* Stier has supposed the cure analogous to animal magnetism, and finds in this incident 'the difference between the higher and the lower,

* Cf. Strauss, 'A New Life of Jesus,' vol. ii.

between the healing and living power of the God-man, and the influence exerted by magnetizing physicists and physicians.' It is hard to see on what he bases his analogy. The cure here was instantaneous, but *instantaneous* healing effected by magnetic power upon the sick is unknown in the history of animal magnetism,* so the analogy is not true. Moreover, to suggest such an analogy seems to imply a material cure, and to overlook the real cause of the cure. The superstitious and surreptitious touch of this woman showed to all alike that she had faith in His power to cure, but, whilst it served as an outward sign, the real cause was inward, and was her faith. To touch without possessing faith would be to fail in finding a cure, but the touch was the ocular demonstration of an active faith. As subsequent events clearly showed, it was her faith which made the difference between her touch and that of the crowd that pressed upon Him.

But was our Lord's question inconsistent with absolute truth? He professed ignorance of the person who had obtained the cure, but was His ignorance feigned or not? Weiss thinks our Lord could not possibly know at once who among the crowd had touched Him, 'more especially as the woman immediately attempted to liberate herself from the crowd.' Stier and others, however, take the opposite view, and agree that the ignorance was feigned. This is not the only occasion on which our Lord feigned ignorance, but whenever it occurs we see it is with a motive quite consistent with absolute truth. That motive is one which always strengthens the faith which is weak, and firmly establishes one nearing the truth. On this occasion the woman was about to depart with but a maimed blessing—'hardly a

* The instances of cures effected by hypnotism, mentioned by F. W. H. Myers in his recent work, 'Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death,' do not claim to be instances of instantaneous cures.

blessing at all had she been suffered to bear it away in secret and unacknowledged, and without being brought into any personal communion with her Healer.* But our Lord desires a greater blessing still for her, so feigns ignorance in order that He may give her the opportunity of receiving that blessing. Trench quotes the case of a father coming among his children and demanding 'Who committed this fault?' himself conscious even while he asks, but at the same time willing to bring the culprit to a free confession, and so to put him in a pardonable state.† Does he in any way violate the laws of highest truth? In every case in which it occurs in our Lord's life there is a moral purpose in the question—an opportunity given at the latest moment for a partial making good of the fault by its unreserved confession, an opportunity which this woman had grace given her to use.†

THE CHOOSING OF THE TWELVE (Mark iii. 14;
Luke vi. 13).

It may be well for us, before proceeding farther, to consider the appointment of the twelve disciples. A right understanding of this most vital subject will help us in interpreting the incidents we have considered and those we are about to consider.

The first question that arises is, Did our Lord deliberately and intentionally select these twelve men for His purpose, and as the result of previous acquaintance with them? or did this close relationship with Him arise from the gradual separation of the more susceptible disciples from the mass, who formed by degrees a narrower and more permanent circle about His person?‡ Schleiermacher, along with others, incline to the latter view, and this for the following

* Trench on the Miracles.

† *Ibid.*

‡ *Vide* Neander's 'Life of Jesus Christ,' p. 121.

reasons: first, because John in his Gospel is silent in regard to so important a point in the development of the history of Christ; secondly, because, according to this, our Lord must have been deceived in admitting Judas Iscariot into the number, or must have made him an Apostle 'with a full consciousness of his inevitable destiny'; and, lastly, because after the death of our Lord the Apostles returned to their homes and work. Other objections are to be added to these—viz., 'The office of an Apostle was not inaugurated with the ceremonial which seems befitting so high a calling.' And if the name 'Apostle' was conferred upon these men, especially by our Lord, it was not confined to them, because others at a later period received the same designation.*

Mark† tells us in his narrative that our Lord ordained twelve 'that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach'; and the Lord Himself expressly tells the Apostles‡ that 'Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you,' as His own companions and workers. If they had first separated of their own accord from the rest of the believing multitude, and chosen Him as their Guide and Master, then our Lord's words would not have been true; but, if necessary, further considerations will show this to have been the case. These Apostles were twelve in number, and that number is not destitute of significance. That number may have been influenced somewhat by the amount of work to be done, and by the number of available men, but doubtless it was chiefly due to the work for which our Lord chose them. They were chosen with the immediate object—whatever the ultimate object might be—of going to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. x. 5, 6), and of being companions with Him in His ministry. 'As destined primarily for the twelvefold people, they were

* *Vide* Neander's 'Life of Jesus Christ,' p. 121.

† Mark iii. 14.

‡ John xv. 16.

twelve.' St. Paul* bears witness to this number, and shows that it was chosen with a national purpose. The Apostles themselves regarded themselves as members of a definite association, as is evidenced by their choice of Matthias to complete their number,† so that the choice of the eleven and of Judas Iscariot must have been the *deliberate* work of our Lord.

But here comes the difficulty of John's silence upon this important point. It cannot fairly be argued that John is silent about this matter, for throughout his narrative he, like Matthew, always assumes this circle of the Twelve to be around his Master,‡ and, whilst not naming all the Apostles, mentions the circumstances with which the Apostolic call commenced.§ Moreover, to John we owe the testimony of our Lord to the fact that He had chosen the disciples, and not they Him. With such evidence as this it seems scarcely correct to say that John is silent about and knows nothing of the deliberate choice of the Twelve.

The choice of Judas Iscariot appears a more formidable difficulty, for either our Lord was deceived in admitting Judas into the Apostolic band, or else (what is entirely out of keeping with His character) Christ must have made him an Apostle with a full consciousness of his destiny. Or, again, our Lord did not know from the beginning that Judas was to prove an enemy and traitor. We cannot do better than quote Neander upon this point.|| He says: 'As for Judas Iscariot, it by no means follows from the passages which say that Christ knew him from the beginning that He knew him as an enemy and a traitor; nor does the awful contrast between his Apostolic calling and his final fate show that Christ was wholly deceived in him. Judas may have at first embraced the proclamation

* 1 Cor. xv. 5. † Acts i. 26. ‡ John vi. 67. § John i. 37.

|| Neander's 'Life of Jesus Christ,' xi., p. 124.

of the kingdom of God with ardent feelings, although with expectations of a selfish and worldly stamp, which, indeed, was the case with others of the Apostles. He may have loved Christ sincerely so long as he hoped to find in Him the fulfilment of his carnal desires. Christ may have seen in him capacities which, animated by pure intentions, might have made him a particularly useful instrument in spreading the kingdom of God. At the same time, He doubtless perceived in him, as in the rest of the Apostles, the impure influence of the worldly and selfish element ; yet He may have hoped (to do for him what He certainly did for the others, viz.) to remove it by the enlightening and purifying effects of His personal intercourse, a result, however, which, we freely admit, depended upon the free self-determination of Judas, and could therefore be unerringly known to none but the Omniscient. And even when Judas, deceived in his carnal and selfish hopes, felt his affection for Christ passing into hatred, the love of the Saviour, hoping all things, though He saw the rising root of evil, may have induced Him to strive the more earnestly to attract him to Himself, in order to save Him from impending ruin.' Assuredly, then, Christ, when He made Judas an Apostle, did not foresee what he would become. If He knew 'what was in man,'* this, nevertheless, was not omniscience, and certainly not knowledge of that which was hidden, undeveloped, in the self-consciousness of another.† It was for the future to show, and that alone, whether the dark passions latent within him would yield to the influence of Jesus or not.

But why have no pomp or ceremonial at the inauguration of the Apostolic office ? 'Its grandeur was purely spiritual.'‡ And yet what magnificence of the Levitical priesthood could surpass the solemnity of that sacred hour, when

* John ii. xxv.

† Pressensé agrees that 'John ii. 25 cannot be taken in an absolute sense.'

‡ *Vide* Pressensé.

Jesus, after passing the night in prayer on one of the hills which surround Capernaum, called His twelve disciples? Neither zeal, nor education, nor social culture was enough for such an office; it needed that 'absolute disinterestedness which makes the life one great self-sacrifice.' The condition of becoming an Apostle was to leave all,* and this was fulfilled by all the Apostles.† Such a condition, however, did not prevent them from living with their families and working with their relatives when not employed in His work; therefore, no surprise need be occasioned when we read that, after the crucifixion, they returned to their homes until the calling for active effort came.

One question remains: Did our Lord confer the name of 'Apostle' upon these men especially? If so, how is it that others who laboured in proclaiming the Gospel at a later period received the same designation? Neander has answered the question thus: 'The more general application of the name "Apostle" in the Apostolic age is no proof that Christ did not originally use it in the narrower sense. The Apostolic mind was under no such painful subserviency to the letter as to avoid the use of a name in a sense suggested by the name itself, simply because Christ had used it in a more contracted signification.' The term Apostles (ἀπόστολοι) denoted persons sent out by our Lord to preach the Gospel, and it is quite natural that those who preached the same Gospel at a later period considered themselves justified in applying to themselves the title given to the first preachers by the Lord Himself.

HEALING OF THE CENTURION'S SERVANT (Matt. viii. 5-13 ;
Mark iii. 20, 21 ; Luke vii. 1-10).

Passing on to the incident of the healing of the centurion's servant—which must be carefully distinguished from the

* Matt. xix. 21.

† *Ibid.*, 27.

miracle of healing the nobleman's son—we find little to cause any difficulty. Strauss has not forgotten to remind us of the difference that exists between the account of the first Evangelist and the third respecting the form of the petition. In Matthew the petitioner applies personally to our Lord with a petition, definitely stated, that He would heal a sick 'boy' who 'lieth at home sick of the palsy.' According to Luke, the centurion sends others to act as intercessors on his behalf, who urge the Lord to come that a cure may be effected. Obviously, such a difference as this has no weight. Matthew, whose account is but an epitome of the event, tells it as though the centurion applied in person, whilst in fact he applied by the aid of others. 'An exchange,' says Trench,* 'of persons, of which all historical narrative and all the language of our common life are full.'

Speaking as a soldier, the centurion refers to himself as 'a man set under authority,' and introduces this expression by the word 'also.' This shows something the centurion possessed in common with Jesus—*i.e.*, the power to command. But did the centurion mean to imply that the Lord possessed only delegated power, and could only act as authorized by Another? This was farthest from the centurion's thought. The authority here spoken of is not above or outside Him, but rather upon Him. If he, a centurion, can so command that in the ranks his word is all powerful, and none dare to disobey, how much more the higher command of Jesus must be found all-sufficient and powerful! Besides being the first instance of a heathen petitioning our Lord for help, this miracle is also one of that small class of 'cures effected at a distance,' one of which we have already dealt with—*viz.*, the healing of the nobleman's son. To the rationalist they seem almost incredible, and the only way he can account for them is by

* *Vide* Trench on the Miracles.

assuming them to be nothing more than instances of prophetic foresight. This assumption, however, does not accord with the belief of the Evangelists, for, as John points out in his account of the miracle of the healing of the nobleman's son, the crisis of the fever happened in the precise hour in which the request was made,* a fact which is undoubtedly intended to indicate an influence exerted from a distance. The first three Evangelists—especially Luke—undeniably regard them as cures performed at a distance, and as such are purposely narrated. Nor can we regard them as other than miraculous cures. In conclusion, we may say with Hase, considering the full resemblance of this to other miraculous narrations, and the great particularity of time and place, that there seems no reason from their miraculous contents to regard the substance of the two stories—the healing of the nobleman's son and the healing of the centurion's servant—as a parable or myth, based on the dissimilar story in 2 Kings v. 9. A belief in Christ's Divine nature, however, is required if we would understand these Divine operations.

OUR LORD ACCUSED OF WORKING BY BEELZEBUB
(Matt. xii. 22-37 ; Mark iii. 22-30).

This accusation followed on the healing by our Lord of the blind and dumb demoniac. Already the Pharisees had in their own minds accused Him of working by Satanic agency, but now they do so openly. The chief question which arises in our minds in this connection, and the only question we will here consider, is, What was the full meaning of the accusation against our Lord of working by Beelzebub? Why was it viewed as bordering on the sin beyond forgiveness? The case is briefly as follows: The Pharisees, who had seen the demoniac cured by the Lord,

* Cf. John iv. 53.

could not deny the reality of the cure nor attribute it to natural agencies. Their minds were too filled with envy to give Him the credit of the cure, so in their dilemma they had recourse to falsehood, and dared to attribute it to the working of an evil magic. The disciples of the Pharisees laid claim to the power of casting out evil spirits, but such power was the work of magic and fraud, and never attributed by them to the work of Satan. Rather did they pretend to fight against Satan ; but the Pharisees would not allow this in our Lord's case, but assert that devils can be cast out by the aid of Satan. It is a contradiction in terms to suppose that evil can be conquered by evil : that one should be freed from the power of the evil one by the power of the evil one. 'Could evil thus do the works of good it would be no more evil.'* But now a power has come among men which can conquer evil, the power of the kingdom of God, which ever propagates itself in contending with evil.

Now we arrive at the climax : our Lord was the accuser, and the true ground of their coming to utter this accusation was to be made known to all. It was because the disposition of their hearts ruled and swayed their decision. Neander says : 'It was the suppression of the consciousness of God and of truth, to whose strivings in their minds their very accusation bore testimony.' So prejudiced were they against Him that they stifled the sense of truth, and, consequently, a starting-point for repentance and access for forgiveness could not be found in their hearts. To remain obstinate and unimpressionable in the face of that miracle was to render themselves inure to the strivings and benevolent operations of the Holy Ghost, and to be self-excluded from that kingdom, the reality of which is put beyond all doubt by the healing of the dumb demoniac, which they had just witnessed, and which could not be gainsaid.

* *Vide* Neander.

THE OPPOSITION OF CHRIST'S MOTHER AND BRETHREN
(Matt. xii. 46-50; Mark iii. 31-35; Luke viii. 19-21).

The opposition of the Pharisees is not the only barrier to His work; but to this period belongs the attempt of our Lord's mother and brethren to draw Him away from His work, which He had been sent into this world to do. It is difficult to imagine that Mary could have been deceived so far as to think her Son was temporarily insane, as Mark tells us.* For some months He had been before the people, and His mighty words and works were spoken of everywhere; yet to Mary it would seem they were only signs of a feeble mind instead of corroborative evidence of His Messiahship. How shall we answer this difficulty? Possibly Mary may have followed them from anxiety of a different kind about her Son. It may have been that the brothers thought the Lord's words evidence of the loss of mental balance, and that Mary was not a partner in this view. Ebrard † suggests that this narrative concerning the family of our Lord (οἱ παρ' αὐτοῦ) has no reference to the mother and brethren of Jesus, but may denote any relation or connection, and in this particular instance may refer to the family at whose house He was staying, and which consisted either of friends or possibly of relatives.

The most probable of these explanations would seem to be the first. The excitement of the crowd and the wild rumours that must have reached her ears could not but strike terror to her heart and make her anxious for the safety of her Son. Without doubting His claims and mission, she may have thought that the Lord could not know the dangers that threatened on every hand, and she may have felt it incumbent upon her to warn Him of these dangers, and urge upon Him the necessity of finding a new sphere

* Mark iii. 21.

† 'The Gospel History,' p. 278.

of operation, where He would find a more intelligent and sympathetic audience. Her anxiety was as unnecessary as it was mistaken, but we are not warranted in supposing or inferring from this incident that Mary's faith in her Son was permanently shaken, nor yet that of His brethren.

CHRIST ASLEEP IN THE STORM (Matt. viii. 23-27 ;
Mark iv. 35-41 ; Luke viii. 22-25).

The early work in Galilee was practically finished when, worn out by the great strain put upon Him, our Lord, with His disciples, crosses to the east side of the lake, there to seek repose and retirement, which the solitude of that shore could best afford. At the time of embarkation the sea wore its best aspect ; but this was soon to give place to one of those storms so characteristic of inland seas, and distinguished by their violence and suddenness. Scarcely had they pushed from the shore when the winds burst suddenly through the mountain gorges, and the boat with its occupants was in danger of being lost. The disciples, though accustomed to the sea, were filled with fear and cried out ; all the time the Lord was asleep, too weary to be awakened by the storm. At last the boat was 'beginning to fill,' and then the disciples awoke Him. He arose at once and rebuked the winds, and the elements recognised their Lord, and at His mandate, 'Peace, be still,' the winds ceased from their howling, the sea from its raging, and all was calm. Such is the story, briefly told. Now to the interpretation of it.

Some have contended that in this miracle our Lord, by natural means, was able to predict the approaching end of the tempest, and that He does nothing more than this, so allaying the anxiety of His disciples. This is possible in regard to the Lake of Gennesaret, which is notoriously exposed to violent and sudden squalls, lying as it does 600 feet lower than the Mediterranean and surrounded by

mountains, through whose openings the storm breaks suddenly in, and as suddenly subsides. In this case, the words intended to console them by communicating this termination of the storm might have been mistaken for the cause of its cessation. However, the view taken by eye-witnesses,* who were mostly men well acquainted with the lake, was rather that the Lord on this occasion exercised a power over the winds and sea. Another interpretation is this: when the Lord awoke and spoke calmly to His disciples, His composure quieted their perturbed minds. A calm in the elements ensued, and they transferred the impression made upon their minds to Nature. Neander, who quotes this theory, also answers it. He says: 'Now, even if this theory were admitted, it would leave the Divine image of Christ untouched in its sublimity. He that, on awaking suddenly from sleep, could impress men's minds with such a belief by a word and a glance must have been the Son of God. Christ must have known that the observers looked upon His words as the cause of the calm that ensued, and would not have employed a deceit to confirm their faith in His sovereignty, which, resting upon the foundations of truth, needed no such props as this. He would rather have taken occasion from such a misunderstanding (had it occurred) to convey a useful lesson to His future Apostles.†' In short, our interpretation of the event will depend upon the general view of the Person of Christ with which we set out. It has been objected to this miracle, that it represents the Lord as taking the matter of His personal safety into His own hands, instead of trusting wholly in the Father. This objection might be allowed if our Lord had been alone in the boat. 'In that case, had He wrought a miracle, it would look as though He had

* Mark iv. 41.

† Neander, 'The Life of Jesus Christ,' 4th German edition, p. 205.

yielded to the temptation which He had successfully withstood in the wilderness, but this is not the case. As far as Christ Himself was concerned, He would apparently have slept through the storm. But He had His Apostles with Him, and His act is intelligible as a lesson to them.*

HEALING OF THE DEMONIACS IN GADARA (Matt. viii. 28, ix. 1; Mark v. 1-20; Luke viii. 26-30).

The subject of demoniacal possession has been already dealt with, and calls for no supplementary remarks here. We can, therefore, at once apply ourselves to the consideration of the miracle of healing of the demoniacs in Gadara. We are quite justified in speaking of more than one demoniac here, for Matthew undoubtedly speaks of two demoniacs whilst the other Evangelists only mention one. This is really no contradiction, but points to the fact that one of these men was of more sharply-marked individuality, and a more notable person in the country—as Augustine suggests—and was so much fiercer—as Maldonatus suggests—as to almost eclipse the miracle wrought by the Lord upon the other. To suppose, with Ebrard, that Matthew here united the cure of the demoniac in the synagogue at Capernaum with this more ferocious demoniac of Gadara is to leave out of account Matthew's knowledge of the localities in the neighbourhood of Gadara, and to make his Gospel a most pitiable endeavour in compiling and portraying the life of our Lord.

Our view of demoniacal possession and a belief in our Lord's Divine nature will suffice to explain most of the details of the Lord's dealings with this man. But when we turn to the destruction of the swine, a unique feature of this cure, we are compelled to ask, How could the event have happened? How can demons act upon swine?

* *Vide* Gilbert's 'Student's Life of Jesus.'

Many attempts have been made to reply to these questions, but all have signally failed. Even those who attempt to evade the force of the narrative run counter to what is clearly recorded as fact and do not eliminate the objections. Krabbe, Ebrard, Delitzsch, and Steinmeyer take the whole account as real history and just as it stands, but raise innumerable difficulties by so doing; others admit the existence of legendary elements in the narrative; whilst others, again, like Lange, Schenkel, and Ewald, endeavour by natural means to explain what—if it have any meaning—must be viewed as spiritual and the work of Jesus Christ. From this it will be seen that a satisfactory explanation of this part of the narrative has not been given, and we are obliged to confess our inability, as yet, to find out the fact on which this obscure reminiscence has been founded.

Other questions arise—*e.g.*, 'If our Lord be held responsible for the destruction of the swine, then an apology for the act is required.' True; an apology is found in the healed men themselves. 'How much is a man better than swine!' The same God who, for purposes often hidden, allows men to die by thousands in war, flood, or pestilence, here, by the destruction of these swine, enforces a moral lesson, which the world has never forgotten.* Now we come to the old objection, which is still raised to-day—*viz.*, 'Our Lord ought not to have allowed these demons to have worked mischief; it was a violation of the Gadarene's right of ownership.' This objection is closely related to its predecessor, and reminds us of the same objection taken to our Lord's act of cursing the fig-tree.† To this objection sufficient answer would be found in Augustine's notice, that Christ did not command the devils to go into the swine, but merely expelled them from the demoniac. Jesus permitted the demons to leave the man, but did not answer

* *Vide* 'Cam. Bib.' on Matthew *in loco*.

† Matt. xxi. 19.

to their request, for that asked a command to enter the swine. The word 'Go' was the sentence of excommunication, but in it was nothing relating to a new place of abode. Trench has an ingenious suggestion which, if correct, will serve to further explain this part of the narrative. He says : 'The demoniac may have needed to have his deliverance sealed and realized to him in the open destruction of his enemies ; not otherwise to be persuaded that Christ had indeed and for ever set him free.'*

Another unique feature of this cure is the fact that Jesus sent the man to proclaim among his own people what great things the Lord had done for him,† and forbid him to join himself to His own disciples. In other places our Lord had repeatedly sought to avoid publicity in His works of healing,‡ but here, for another motive, the command is reversed. The Lord expressly states the motive of His refusal, and any further speculations are valueless. We know that the man's case had been a singularly bad one, and not even the radical cure that had been wrought by the Lord would repair the weakened body and health to such a degree as to fit him for the exciting and laborious task of accompanying our Lord through most of the vicissitudes and scenes and chances of His busy wandering life.

THE HEALING OF THE PARALYTIC AT BETHESDA
(John v. 1-47).

Leaving the Gadarene, we may next turn to our Lord's work in Jerusalem at the Feast of Purim. After an absence of some months He returns to Jerusalem, not in order to attend this feast, but presumably to continue His Messianic work. If we would understand aright John's account of this wonderful cure of the sick man in the pool of Bethesda,

* *Vide* Trench on the Miracles, p. 186.

† Mark v. 19.

‡ *Cf.* Mark i. 44, iii. 12.

we must, first of all, learn what this pool really was, and how far John's account is literally correct. We call to mind the numerous holy wells and mineral springs which the superstition of the Roman Catholic Church has consecrated as places of healing grace—some rightly, on account of their medicinal effect; others wrongly—and here we seem to have a mineral spring of this kind. It was, moreover, an intermittent spring, the efficacy of which was found to be greatest at the time when the water first began to bubble. It is to be compared with the gassy spring of Kissingen, which, as Tholuck remarks, begins to bubble at about the same time every day. Just at those times it is that the development of gas is the most efficacious. Josephus and the Rabbins tell us that there were many mineral springs in Palestine; but the thoughtful piety of the people of Jerusalem had given this spring the name of Bethesda ('place of mercy'), and had adorned it with five porticos in which to lay the sick, who hoped for a cure from these healing waters.

But, if our explanation be correct, we seem to be running contrary to John's interpretation; for he explains the bubbling and efficacy of this spring as being due to the action of an angel, who descended upon the spring and troubled the waters.* This latter was probably the popular belief, which may have been credited even by the Evangelist himself; but, what is more to the point, John† certainly did not

* John v. 4.

† Verse 3, from the word 'waiting' right on to the end of verse 4, is omitted by the oldest representatives of each great group of authorities. On the other hand, the whole passage is not contained in any authority, except Latin, which gives an ante-Nicene text. The passage is inserted in the later texts of the Memphitic and Armenian, which omit it, wholly or in part, in their earliest form. The earliest addition to the original text was the closing part for verse 3. This was a natural gloss suggested by verse 7, which is undisturbed. The addition of verse 4 was a gloss probably embodying an early tradition. The whole passage is omitted

record this belief in his narrative, for the words of verse 4 and the closing part of verse 3, according to the best ancient manuscripts, are certainly spurious. We are, therefore, not bound to discern in this spring a healing fountain of peculiar miraculousness, for we know that John wrote under Divine inspiration, and thus his narrative was kept free from the superstitions of the age in which he lived. Passing on, now, to the miracle itself, we need only notice three points, and these of little importance. 'Why should our Lord ask the man if he wished to be made whole?' question some. The answer would seem to be obvious, for already he had lain there for years, only anxious to find a cure, and his presence by the pool indicated his willingness to be healed. The question was not without a purpose, and that an important one. It had nothing to do with religious scruples, nor even with his prejudices and views. Our Lord did not say, 'Art thou willing to be made whole, although it be the Sabbath?' The question was, in fact, the first step towards creating in him once more a will, in order to gain a means of effecting his cure. The man had lost all courage. This question was to arouse him out of his lethargy and despondency; he needed more faith, and some expectation of being cured would thus be aroused in him. He was persuaded that he needed a friend to help him into the pool, and because this friend was not to be found he felt assured that he could never accomplish it, and so hope vanished and despair took its place.* The story goes on to show how

in *N* B.C.¹ and the majority of later authorities. The late Bishop Westcott wrote of this passage: 'There obviously could be no motive for omitting the words if they originally formed part of John's text; nor could any hypothesis of arbitrary omission explain the partial omissions in the earliest authorities which omit, while all is intelligible if the words are regarded as two glosses. The most ancient evidence and internal probability perfectly agree.'

* John v. 7.

effectual was this question. Unexpectedly, with the tone of one who can command, our Lord said, 'Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.' The enfeebled will, for the first time, now awakened from its torpor, and, 'in the sudden elasticity of his awakening faith, he understood our Lord's call, obeyed his summons, stood up, stepped forth, and found himself healed.'

It is to be noted, too, that the 'thirty-eight years' mentioned in verse 5 express the duration of this man's infirmity. To suppose, as some have done, that they refer to the period of time which the poor cripple had actually spent at the edge of that pool, or to regard the age of this man as being thirty-eight years, is to misread the plain statement of the narrative.*

Almost every miracle that our Lord wrought was accompanied and followed by, openly or secretly, the opposition of the Pharisees or scribes, or both. If no real cause for complaint could be found, one was soon invented, no matter how trivial it might be. On this occasion a most plausible cause seemed available, for 'He had done these things on the Sabbath-day.' 'Therefore,' says John, 'the Jews sought to slay Jesus, and did persecute Him. But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.' What is the meaning of this expression? It has been urged that this belongs to another place, and has no real connection with this passage; or that it is a phrase borrowed from Philo. Here is a statement of the case: Our Lord is defending His action of healing on the Sabbath, and He bases His defence on the relation of the Son to the Father. We are not told of the official forms which the Pharisees made use of to call Him to account, nor do we know what they were.† By some way they set themselves up as men well versed in the law, and told Him

* *Vide* Trench on the Miracles, p. 271.

† Lange surmises that possibly Christ was cited before the Sanhedrin.

that even God Himself rested on the seventh day. In His reply to them our Lord rejected the narrow limits which their contracted minds placed around the Sabbath. From the first moment of creation until the present time God has been ceaselessly working for the salvation of men. From such activity there is no rest, for the doing of such work is at the same time a Sabbath—a rest. This rest is an energizing rest, and mere cessation from activity is not of the essence of the Sabbath. ‘To cease to do good is not to keep the Sabbath, but to sin.’ Sabbaths have never hindered, nor can hinder, the work of the Father, therefore they must not hinder the work of His Son.

IN THE HOUSE OF SIMON (Luke vii. 36-50).

This narrative is peculiar to Luke,* and must not be identified with the account of a similar incident in Mark xiv. 3. This identification, however, is often made, but can only be done in an arbitrary way. Here the host is Simon, whilst in Mark the host is named Simon, but with this important addition—‘the leper.’ The name Simon was one of the commonest of Jewish names, and over and over again do we meet with it in the New Testament. There are two Simons among the Twelve; there are nine Simons mentioned in the New Testament alone,† whilst Josephus refers to no less than twenty. In a land like Palestine, where names were few, there must have been thousands of Simons. It will readily be seen how impossible it is to identify the two incidents on such unsafe ground as a similarity of names.

* Luke vii. 36-39.

† Simon Peter and Simon Zelotes (Luke vi. 15); Simon, one of the Lord’s brethren (Matt. xiii. 15); Simon of Cyrene (Matt. xxvii. 32); Simon, father of Judas Iscariot (John vi. 71); Simon Magus (Acts viii. 9); Simon of Joppa (Acts ix. 43); Simeon, for it is the same name, who took the infant Jesus in his arms in the Temple (Luke ii. 25); and Simon, called Niger, a prophet at Antioch (Acts xiii. 1).

But this is not the only ground upon which some base the identification of Luke's account with Mark's account. The act itself was the same in both cases, and seems to point to one incident. But anointing of the head was common enough, and anointing the feet with ointments was not without precedents,* so that there is little unlikelihood that our Lord should have been twice honoured in this manner. It is now almost generally accepted that there were two anointings of our Lord by women, and in both cases when He sat at meat in the house of men named Simon. The differences between the two incidents are as follows: in the one case the anointing is among friends;† in the other it is in the house of a Pharisee who has no real sympathy with our Lord, nor yet the guests at the table; for they are offended that He should presume to forgive sin.‡ In one case the woman is an intimate friend of our Lord;§ in the other she is a notorious sinner, who in the hour of the anointing first experiences forgiveness of sins.|| In one case the act is defended by our Lord as a preparation for His burial;¶ in the other it is the expression of a love and faith which secure forgiveness of sins.** Add to these the fact that, 'with the risen Lazarus sitting at the table,†† even this Pharisee would hardly have jumped so rapidly to the conclusion that his Guest was no prophet of God, after all.

With Trench we might well remark that, since these arguments appear so convincing, it is a cause for surprise to find how much opinion has fluctuated from the first 'on the relation of these histories one to another,' the Greek Fathers generally distinguishing, the Latin seeing in them but one and the same history. Luke's account, in time, place,

* See 'Dict. of Greek and Rom. Ant.,' s.v. *Cœna*, p. 253.

† John xii. 1, 2.

‡ Luke vii. 39-49.

§ John xi. 5, xii. 3.

|| Luke vii. 37-47.

¶ Mark xiv. 8.

** Luke vii. 47-50.

†† John xii. 2.

circumstances, character, the words uttered, and the results, differs from those found recorded in the other three Gospels.

Turning to the Parable of the Two Debtors, which was spoken on the occasion of this anointing,* we find two things which are liable to misinterpretation. In the first place, are we to conclude, as at first might appear, that there is any advantage in having multiplied transgressions; in owing five hundred pence rather than fifty? that the farther one has wandered from God, the closer, if he be brought back at all, will he cleave to Him afterwards? The more sin, the more love. Would it not follow, let us sin much now that we may love much hereafter? And must we, then, conclude that for a man to have been preserved from gross offences in the time before he was awakened to a deeper religious earnestness, this, instead of being a matter of everlasting thanksgiving, would interpose an effectual barrier to any very near and high communion of love with His Saviour? No; our Lord is endeavouring to show Simon by this parable his own insincerity and cold selfishness, together with his need of forgiveness of sins. Pharisaism had blinded his spiritual eyes, and he was rendered unable to feel that he had any sin to be forgiven, and therefore he loved little. A true saint recognises the true nature of sin, and cries out to God in heartrending confession for the removal of his sin. He has a deep sense of sin—not 'much sin'—and this awakens in him much love that God's grace should be so bountiful and free. Out of his own mouth Simon was judged, and pronounced himself to be the one who loved little and was forgiven little. But what is the full meaning of the expression, 'To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little'? Is love a means of our forgiveness? Paul, in his Epistle to the

* *Vide* Luke vii. 47-50.

Romans,* speaks of faith as the means of pardon. Are love and faith synonymous terms? 'Here,' says Stier, 'many students of Scripture have gone astray.' Neander strangely speaks of the faith of this woman being sound, 'because it proceeded from love,' which is a perversion of language. Olshausen speaks of her as possessing a receptive activity of mind, an analogous fountain of receptive love in the root of the innermost life, which rendered her able to believe in forgiveness. Lange explains the words by supposing that our Lord was pleased to call the ardent desire of the woman love, by means of which the forgiveness had been imparted. Steinmeyer speaks in the same way about a love of ardent desire, longing for forgiveness, as having been present in this special case, and to this he would limit the application of these words. We might sum up all these expositions, in V. Gerlach's strong words, as 'An unworthy disfiguring of the beautiful story, in the very spirit of Simon.'† The whole difficulty centres in the word 'love' (*ἀγαπᾶ*). It seems to express the state of heart of those yearning for forgiveness, and willing, even though they are far from understanding, to receive the love of God. But this does not exhaust its full meaning, for it lives in the heart of the believer as well as the would-be believer. Here in this woman we see it showing itself by her kindly acts, proving to Simon and those assembled with him the possession of this love. 'It was,' as Trench expresses it, 'love at its negative pole, not as yet made positive; for the absolving word of grace can alone make it this. In this sense that woman "loved much," and attested the intense yearning of her heart after a reconciliation with a God of love, from whom she had separated herself by her sins.'

* Rom. v. 1.

† Cf. Stier's 'Words of the Lord Jesus,' vol. iii., p. 469.

CHAPTER VI

OUR LORD'S LATER MINISTRY

THE division of our Lord's work into the 'early ministry' and the 'later ministry' is one which is quite arbitrary, and is used by us here only for the purpose of dividing into chapters.

THE RETURN OF THE TWELVE (Mark vi. 30 ; Luke ix. 10).

We may begin this 'later ministry' by a short study of the return of the twelve disciples from their trial mission in Galilee. As yet the men were but 'babes in spiritual things,' and even at a later period they showed themselves unacquainted with the real spirit and meaning of our Lord's teaching, as if they were incapable of understanding it. Yet these are the men whom the Lord sends out as His Apostles. This seems a paradox : How can they be fit messengers of our Lord when they are incapable of knowing the whole truth of His teaching, as well as unacquainted with the Gospel itself?

The mission of these twelve men had more than one object ; but among these the preaching of salvation was not one. This could only come after much training and teaching, and after the Holy Ghost had been given to them, to confirm that teaching and lead them into 'all truth.' Here we must view this mission as a trial of their qualifications for the great purpose of their calling. It was a test mission, partly to accustom them to independent labour and partly to see what promise they gave of fitness to be His ambassadors, when He Himself should lay down the visible reins of government.

An additional object of this mission seems to have been to spread by their agency through all the towns and villages

of Galilee the announcement that the kingdom of God had come. 'They were to proclaim,' says Neander, 'everywhere that the kingdom of God, the object of all men's hopes, had come; to point out to the people of Galilee the great grace of God in calling the Founder of that kingdom from their midst.* By so working they were helping on the work of their Lord and fitting themselves for still nobler service.

A noticeable feature of this mission is that it was confined to Galilee. In His valedictory address to them our Lord expressly said, 'Into the cities of the Samaritans enter ye not.' Whether we take this injunction as specially referring to the Samaritans, or to the Gentiles as a whole, Galilee is, beyond doubt, the chosen field for this preliminary experiment in the exercise of their calling. But why was this so? Why should the Samaritans be excluded? And if our Lord did exclude them, why did He not explain to His disciples the grounds of this restriction?

This difficulty soon disappears when we remember the proper period of our Lord's life to which it belongs. The Divine plan of the proclamation of the Gospel was to be effected 'of the Jews,'† and the immediate mission of our Lord was to 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'‡ From this plan our Lord, save on two occasions, never departed till after His resurrection; and only after the Jews had rejected their King, and had had every opportunity of finding in Him their promised Messiah, does He give to His disciples a ministry for all men,§ such as, from the first, He perhaps regarded His own to have been.|| Besides this, these twelve men were utterly incapable of reaching the minds of the Gentiles, and showing them the spiritual nature of our Lord's kingdom. They might, even with their defective apprehension of our Lord's teaching and

* Neander's 'Life of Jesus Christ,' p. 281.

† Matt. xv. 24.

§ *Ibid.*, xxviii. 19-21.

† John iv. 22.

|| *Ibid.*, v. 13.

claims, be successful in making Jews of them; but these Jewish ideas must be eradicated or ennobled before they could know the pure Christian faith. The Jews had the Scriptures and the hope of a Messiah, upon which the disciples could work, and which they could show received their fulfilment in Himself; but with Gentiles there was no such groundwork, and to attempt to preach Christ among them might be only to plant seeds of error, and would probably have ended in failure and brought discredit on the Christian name. 'But,' it may be asked, 'why did not our Lord explain the grounds of this restriction?' It will be sufficient to reply that our records of the Lord's words are not fully preserved to us, but that our Gospels are just fragments containing the essential features. But, if this prove insufficient, we know 'Christ could not at that time have given them all His reasons, for then He must have imparted to them what they could not comprehend.'*

THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND (Matt. xiv. 15-21; Mark vi. 33-44; Luke ix. 11-17; John vi. 5-15).

After the return of the twelve Apostles, our Lord withdrew from Capernaum and the multitudes who thronged Him, and, crossing the sea, came to Bethsaida Julias.† There may have been more than one motive for this, but Mark is careful to tell us that the main purpose was that His disciples might have a little rest.‡ They had laboured for and had refreshed others, now they must rest and be refreshed. As soon as they had started on their journey the people perceived it, and, making all speed, and increasing in numbers as it went along, the crowd reached the place before our Lord arrived with His disciples. All that day He taught them many things,§ and healed those who were sick of divers diseases; and when it began to grow

* *Vide* Neander. † Luke ix. 10. ‡ Mark vi. 31. § *Ibid.*, 34.

dark the crowd still thronged Him, desiring to hear more of His words and to see some miracle wrought at His hands. The disciples grew anxious, and wished Him to send the people away, that they might get food for themselves; for the place was desert, and food for so great a throng could not be at any cost procured. This gave our Lord His opportunity, and, receiving five barley loaves and two small fishes from the hands of a boy who was among them, He fed the five thousand men, besides women and children, with them.

We will not attempt to answer the endeavours which have been made to remove the supernatural element from this incident, and to try to explain it as nothing more than a generous example set by our Lord, which opened the hearts of these Galilean multitudes, who had some provisions, and caused them to bring everything to Him, to be distributed for the good of the whole company. Such explanations require more suppositions, all of a very doubtful kind, to support them than our credulity will allow us to accept, and we prefer to join with the throng which witnessed the incident, and see in it evidence of Divine power resting upon our Lord, and working mightily through Him.*

'But,' it is asked, 'is the feeding of these five thousand the same incident as the feeding of the four thousand, or are these two separate miracles?' Both incidents, though substantially alike, and differing in matters comparatively unimportant, stand forth in the life of our Lord as distinct events, belonging to different times and circumstances. Some of these divergencies may be incidental—*e.g.*, the number present and the number of the loaves on each occasion, these numbers being approximate—but all other divergencies can neither be classed as 'incidental,' nor can they be reconciled, if the one miracle is to be identified with the other. The scene of the miracle of the feeding

* John vi. 14.

of the five thousand is the east of the lake, where it is intimated that the Apostles could get food if they had money, while in the feeding of the four thousand the place was desert, and food could not be found even if they had money.* Another noteworthy difference is found in the names of the baskets used on each occasion. In the first miracle the Greek word for basket, *κόφινος*, is used by all the Evangelists, while in the feeding of the four thousand the word is *σπυρίς*. This is a very curious circumstance,† which was no accident; for our Lord, when at a later date referring to these two miracles, preserves the distinction.‡ The fact that our Lord is careful to remind His disciples of two different miracles is also additional proof of the reality of two separate incidents.

CHRIST WALKS ON THE LAKE (Matt. xiv. 22-33; Mark vi. 45-51; John vi. 15-21).

Dismissing the disciples at evening, the Lord commanded them to sail across the lake, whilst He sent the multitudes away. From the language of John § ('Jesus was not yet come to them') we conclude that, prior to their leaving Him, He had an understanding with them that He would follow on foot on their way to Capernaum. At first the voyage proceeded pleasantly, but before they had gone far they began to encounter a storm; for the wind arose, and the lake was covered by waves. In the fourth watch of the night our Lord appears to them, walking on the water, but,

* Mark viii. 2.

† Gilbert explains this fact as being proof of two miracles wrought in different localities, each of which had its own peculiar name for basket. These local names clung to the accounts of the respective miracles from the first. Such a local difference may readily be assumed to have existed between the speech of the Galileans from the region of Capernaum and the people who lived on the eastern side of the lake.

‡ Matt. xvi. 9, 10; Mark viii. 19-20.

§ John vi. 17.

according to Mark, 'looked as though He would have passed by them.' This brings us to the first question raised by some concerning this miracle: Why did our Lord appear as though He would have passed by the disciples in the boat? He undoubtedly was going to their relief—why, then, pretend to refrain from coming? It is possible that our Lord refrained from directly approaching the ship because that would have frightened the disciples more than His merely passing by. It was a temporary expedient, designed in some way for their good, and may be compared with such cases as the healing of the daughter of the Syro-phenician woman and the raising of Lazarus from the dead. In these latter cases the cure is delayed, apparently, to strengthen the faith of the suppliants. May not a similar cause account for our Lord's conduct towards the disciples on the lake?

But how account for the walking on the water? Was it a miracle, or is it to be accounted for by natural means? Bolten construes it into an act of swimming; Olshausen* supposes that, by the exercise of His will, the Lord's bodily nature became exempted, for the time being, from the conditions of its earthly existence; whilst others attempt to render it intelligible by the aid of Lucian's cork-footed men, or the water-treaders, or some other foreign analogies. Some writers, like Weiss and Schenkel, feel there was no adequate purpose for this display of Divine power, and suppose that our Lord walked by the sea, as in John xxi. 1, and not upon it. 'Just when the disciples saw Jesus they reached the land, and so it seemed as though His presence saved them; and, later, what seemed to them miraculous actually assumed the form of a miracle.'† This explanation is grammatically possible, but, like the foregoing sup-

* *Vide* Meyer on Matthew, vol. i., p. 388.

† Quoted from Gilbert's 'Student's Life of Jesus,' p. 170.

positions, violates the purpose and character of the whole narrative. The incident is without significance if the miraculous element is eliminated. All the disciples understood the incident to be miraculous, and most of these were men most capable of knowing. Peter the fisherman, accustomed for years to live by the lake, would certainly, on a moonlight night, know the difference between the shore and the water; yet they were convinced that here was a miracle, as we may see in their fear of what they supposed to be an apparition. With the roar of the waves sounding in their ears, the Lord speaks to them in such tones that they hear. But how could they hear if He were far from them? To render the incident intelligible we are compelled to recognise the miraculous element in the story.

But what can we say of the purport of the incident? The lives of the disciples are not said to have been in peril, and it is probable that they would have safely reached the shore even if our Lord had not come to them. The miracle had a purpose common with other miracles. It served to form a practical demonstration of the Messiahship of our Lord and His power over Nature. 'He manifested forth His glory,' and His disciples were not slow to recognise it.

John's account—which is the simplest, and has the least of the miraculous about it—contains an expression which might seem to deny Peter's act of walking on the water. In John vi. 21 we read that 'immediately the ship was at the land whither they went,' almost implying that there was no room for Peter's act. The difficulty is treated by Gilbert in the following words: 'On the one hand, six rods of lake would amply meet the requirements of the narrative, and on the other the statement of John that they were immediately at land would be natural enough even if they rowed fifty or a hundred rods.' After hours of conflict with the waves, a

quiet row of fifty or a hundred rods, with Jesus on board and the wind no longer blowing, would seem as nothing.'

THE HEALING OF THE SYROPHŒNICIAN WOMAN'S
DAUGHTER (Matt. xv. 21-28 ; Mark vii. 24-30).

Our Lord's motive for going to the borders of Tyre and Sidon obviously was to find the seclusion and rest which He had sought to find, but in vain, on the east side of the lake, and could not find in Capernaum. Here, probably, He may escape popular attention, and get away from the crowds that thronged Him. No; for with significant, almost pathetic, words Mark tells us 'He could not be hid; for a woman, a Syrophœnician by nation, came and besought Him that He would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.*

The miracle belongs to the class of cures effected at a distance; two of which we have already considered. One important circumstance connected with this miracle must not be passed over. It is asked, 'How can this incident be made to harmonize with the spirit which characterized all our Lord's earthly life?' Here He seems to lower Himself to the level of Jewish prejudice and call the woman a Gentile dog. Had our Lord a real aversion to the heathen, which He managed to conceal save on this occasion, when it burst the cords which bound it and made itself apparent? But if so, why did He grant her request? His was the power to withhold, just as it was His to give. The story shows, what we have noticed already in other cases, that in order to draw out and exhibit and strengthen the faith of the suppliant our Lord acts as though He would have ignored the request, or even would not hear it. His reply to her was apparently stern and severe, but under these stern words we recognise the exact truth: 'It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to the dogs.' In

* Mark vii. 24-26.

such parabolic language He reminds her of His life's mission. It was not intended that He should come to the Gentiles, but rather that, whilst His message was for all men, He should come to them at a subsequent period, in the person of the Holy Ghost, acting through the medium of the Apostle's teaching. It was God who had chosen the Jewish nation, and it was not for God's Son to disregard His Father's original purpose ; the Jews were to have a last chance of fulfilling their mission. 'Hence,' as the Bishop of London* has aptly reminded us, 'our Lord, even while He denounces the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees, always speaks with respect of their office. "They sit in Moses' seat," He says. Moreover, that this natural and fitting respect for a commission given by His Father can be construed into Jewish prejudice is shown to be absurd by nearly every word He speaks.' It is a Samaritan who is held up as the ideal of a kind neighbour ; it is a Roman centurion's servant who is healed equally with the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue ; it was the advent of some Greeks who wished to see Him which made Him cry, 'The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified.' Then, again, the grand promise, 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me,' can scarcely be accused of being tinged with Jewish prejudice, to say nothing of the great last command, which echoes down the ages to generations which are yet unborn : 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.'

Hilgenfeld finds it difficult to reconcile our Lord's attitude towards this woman with that towards the Roman centurion. But it is quite probable that this centurion, though a Gentile, was a proselyte. His relationship with the elders of the synagogue in Capernaum, together with the fact that he had built there a synagogue, appear to point in this direc-

* Bishop Ingram's 'New Testament Difficulties.'

tion. Here, on the contrary, was a complete stranger ; but her faith and humility prevailed with Him, and 'her daughter was made whole from that hour.'

THE FEEDING OF THE FOUR THOUSAND (Matt. xv. 32-39 ; Mark viii. 1-10).

It is not necessary for us to go over the points of difference between this miracle and that of the feeding of the five thousand : these have been already noticed. But still there remain difficulties, all of which are based on the identification of the two miracles, or arise from a failure to understand the purpose of the latter one. It is asked, for instance, 'Would not the consequences of the first miracle have deterred Christ from working a second like it?' If both miracles had been wrought in the same place, and before the eyes of the same people, then undoubtedly there would have been a useless display of Divine power. But we must remember that Galilee was the scene of the feeding of the five thousand, while the four thousand belonged to the ten cities on the east side of the lake. Because the Galileans in their excitement had wished to take our Lord by force and make Him King, as an outcome of this miracle, it did not follow that a lesser miracle would have had the same effect in the cities of Decapolis.*

Similarly, it is asked, 'Is it probable that disciples could have been so forgetful and helpless a second time?' Olshausen tries to get rid of the difficulty by reminding us of the feeble capacities of these disciples ; but this does not get rid of the difficulty.† Experience of men in general teaches us that past deliverances and benefits are soon forgotten, and that in the hour of need they fly to any source save the Giver of all. But here we may suppose that, even if they remembered the miracle of feeding the

* Gilbert's 'Student's Life of Jesus,' p. 182. † *Vide* Meyer.

five thousand, they could not imagine Him repeating the miracle. If this be so, then the difficulty of the disciples was nothing but the difficulty of the modern 'critics.'

THE CONFESSION OF PETER (Matt. xvi. 13-23; Mark viii. 27-33; Luke ix. 18-22).

The confession of Peter was brought about by our Lord asking the disciples what was the general opinion of Himself and His work. It may be looked upon as a test question, to try to find out how far He fell below, or even surpassed, the popular conception of the Messiah. The reply showed that men looked upon our Lord as a prophet, or as a resuscitated John the Baptist; but the title of Messiah was attributed to Him only by the few. The replies must have been very disappointing, but still one source remains yet to be examined—the Apostles, what is their conception of Jesus? They had already expressed their belief in Him; but, with all this current opinion, may not their opinion have changed, and they proved as fickle and faithless as the rest of men? Peter, who was, as Chrysostom says, the mouth of the Apostles, the leader of the Apostolic choir, is the spokesman on this occasion, and, without any qualifying clauses, confesses his unfailing belief in our Lord as the Messiah. For some time past he had been convinced in his own mind of the truth of his confession, but now publicly he confirms the faith that has remained unchangeable from the time when he first was brought by Andrew to the feet of the Lord.

We may judge something of the pleasure afforded the Master by this frank confession by the remarkable language which He uses in acknowledgment of it; for, by a play on the word 'Peter,' our Lord says: 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'

These words, even among the early Christian Fathers, were found difficult of explanation,* and to-day are still the occasion of much dispute. Perhaps much of the difficulty will disappear if we take the passage in the light of Eastern modes and ideas of building; for the figure of rock foundation is purely an Eastern one. We will take the passage sentence by sentence.

'Thou art Peter,' *i.e.*, a stone (Petros). The word found here is not a common one in Holy Writ, but it is to be found in 2 Macc. i. 16 and iv. 41, where it is used of pieces of stone with which the people pelted their enemies. Canon Girdlestone, writing on this passage, says: 'They were, no doubt, larger than ordinary stones, and were what would naturally be used as building-stones. It is to be observed that this was not the first occasion on which Christ called Simon a building-stone. When Andrew introduced his brother to Jesus, two years earlier, the Lord said, 'Thou art Simon, son of Jonas; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is interpreted Peter' (Petros). Thus it was already appointed that the Apostle Simon should become a stone in the great edifice which our Lord was founding.

'And upon this rock (Petra), I will build My Church.' The Church could scarcely be founded upon a building-stone, but on the rock on which the stone was laid. Accordingly, we find the Lord, not using the word 'Petros,' a stone, but 'Petra,' a rock; the word used of the house founded on a rock, in Matt. vii. 24. In Eph. ii. 20, 21, we find Paul saying that Christians 'are built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone.' Thus Peter was one piece out of many, and none of them were of any value apart from the Lord. Hence it is that Paul says, in 1 Cor. iii. 11, that Christ is the only foundation. The confession

* *Vide* Salmon's 'Infallibility of the Church,' p. 329.

of Peter showed that he was on that rock, and all others who confessed the same truth were also on the rock. Taking the structural figure used by our Lord, we understand that He Himself, Divine yet human, is the basis of the Church, which is being gradually built up through the ages, the Apostles and Prophets of the New Testament coming next to Him in historical order, and others following.*

‘And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.’ Hades, which our Authorized Version calls ‘hell,’ is the region of the dead, placed, according to Jewish tradition, in the centre of the earth, and admitting only the souls of men after life on earth. It was strongly fortified, and its gates and walls defied all the efforts of its inhabitants to escape. But what has this to do with the Church of Christ? Two explanations have been given, both expressing the same idea. The gates of Hades represent the power of death over all men. But even death is not omnipotent, for the members of Christ’s Church burst through its gates, and pass to a joyful resurrection. Death can separate friend from friend, but we who are members of the true Church, ‘neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.’

The other explanation is derived from the fact that in Oriental cities the gate is the scene of deliberation and counsel. ‘Hence “the gates” here may represent the evil designs planned by the powers of hell to overthrow the Church, the wiles and machinations of the devil and his angels; Hades being taken, not as the abode of the dead,

* *Vide* ‘English Church Teaching,’ by Moule, Girdlestone, and Drury, p. 225.

but the realm of Satan. Neither malignant spirits nor their allies, such as sin, persecution, heresy, shall be able to wreck the eternal building which our Lord was founding. Combining the two expositions, we may say that our Lord herein promises that neither the power of death nor the power of the devil shall prevail against it, nor overpower it, nor keep it in subjection.*

‘And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.’ Peter, then, was to have the keys of Christ’s kingdom. In the East the key was the symbol of authority, and ‘to confer a key’ was a phrase equivalent to bestowing a situation of great trust and distinction. Peter’s authority was to open the gate of the kingdom to Jew and Gentile. Accordingly, we find him first preaching the Gospel to the Jew on the memorable Day of Pentecost.† Again, when the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile had been broken down, Peter was the first to preach to the Gentiles also. Thus Peter received from our Lord the privilege of historical priority in the work of evangelizing the world. This honour was his alone, and, from its very nature, Peter could have no successor. ‘In preaching the Gospel to Jew and Gentile, his successors are counted by millions; but in being the first to preach it, he has no successor.’

‘Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.’ The binding and loosing here spoken of is the making and relaxing of decisions affecting rites and matters of discipline. The term was common amongst the Jews, and was always applied to a decision about ceremonies or rites, establishing which were lawful and unlawful. ‘The school of Shammai bound men when it declared this or that act to be a transgression of the Sabbath law. The school of

* *Vide* ‘Pul. Com. on Matthew,’ vol. ii., p. 136.

† Acts ii. 41.

Hillel loosed when it set men free from the obligations thus imposed.'

It should be borne in mind, however, that this privilege was not given to Peter alone, but was to be shared with many others. Canon Girdlestone reminds us of a case in the Acts where this is illustrated historically. In Acts xv. a case of binding and loosing is carefully narrated. Peter is present, but not as an absolute monarch, but as one who is conspicuous among many brethren. When we turn to the Gospels we find in Matt. xviii. 18 the Lord's followers, as a body, have laid upon them the same duty that had been assigned to Peter, and in words which are identical.

THE TRANSFIGURATION (Matt. xvii. 1-9 ; Mark ix. 2-10 ;
Luke ix. 28-36).

It was six days after announcing to the disciples a future return in glory that our Lord took Peter, James, and John up into a high mountain, and was transfigured before them. What that incident really was, is, has been, and will be, a matter of speculation and controversy. Almost every writer, from the days of Tertullian until now, has put his own interpretation upon it, so that we have almost as many and varied interpretations as we have theologians. The incident has been regarded, even by so early a writer as Tertullian, and as late a writer as Pressensé, as a vision which confuses the real with the visionary element contained in the narrative. Lange attempts to show the higher naturalism of the incident ; the heavenly nature of Jesus flashed forth from under the earthly, enabling the disciples to peep into the spirit-world, and see Moses and Elias, and hear our Lord conversing with them. Ewald opposes to this a theory which makes the incident one of an ideal character : that the perfection of the kingdom of God was unquestionably disclosed to view, in such a manner, however, that everything of a

lower nature was lost sight of amid the pure light of a higher sphere of things. Baumgarten-Crusius assumes only some inward manifestation or other in Jesus Himself, such as led to His obtaining beforehand a glimpse of the glory that was to follow His death ; while Hase and Schleiermacher see in the Transfiguration nothing more than a secret interview with two unknown personages, in connection with which a good deal has been made of atmospheric illumination, and the effect of the shadows that were projected.

The popular explanation is the one which regards the incident as a vision ; but whilst much is visionary, it is impossible to deny that there are realities in it. The appearing of Moses and Elias we may regard as visionary, but that there was a glorious change which came over the outward appearance of our Lord can only be understood as a reality. Hase dismisses this vision theory by saying that such a theory 'is opposed to the number of dreamers, who, in opposition to the Gospel account, must be reduced to Peter, and also makes it necessary to assume a special coincidence in the remarks of Jesus.' Luke's account is obviously one which has been taken from a tradition, which has divested the incident of its visionary character.* What was the significance of the incident to the disciples ? The Transfiguration must have been intended expressly for the three disciples, as is evident from the ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ ('Hear Him.') It taught them that the predictions of the Messiah are fulfilled in our Lord. Moses and Elias are to be heard no longer, for now goes forth the command, 'Hear ye Him'; secondly, it was a new confirmation of the fact that their Lord was Son of God ; for they beheld His glory : and, lastly, it corroborated the words He had just been uttering to His disciples, that He must die and suffer many things, and be crucified and rise again. Why were the disciples charged not to make known

* Luke ix. 30, 31.

occurrence?*

The impulse to talk about what they had seen would be very strong, but this sacred and significant event was an object neither for curiosity nor gossip. To the other disciples it would have been a meaningless subject of conversation, for it was not until the resurrection that their minds were enlightened and they could see the connection between the Old and the New Covenant. In the language of Archbishop Trench, 'the mystery of Christ's Sonship should not be revealed to the world till it was attested beyond all doubt, till "He was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead."†

But why should only three of the disciples be especially favoured, and not all the disciples? This is the same question that was asked in connection with the healing of Jairus' daughter, so it seems to call for almost the same answer. These three were evidently farther advanced in spiritual things than were the rest, so they were the better able to profit by such an experience as this. But the effect of the Transfiguration was not only felt by the chosen few, but we may suppose that the lofty confidence in the Lord and the changed state of mind made themselves felt upon the other members of the Apostolic circle; an impression would be made which must have served to keep the rest in 'a state of expectation likely to do them good,' and which was realized at the Feast of Pentecost, when their minds were enlightened and all was made plain.

THE STATER IN THE MOUTH OF THE FISH (Matt. xvii. 24-27).

This miracle, which is peculiar to Matthew's Gospel, arose in connection with the payment of the half-shekel, which was imposed upon all males among the Jews of twenty years of age and upwards, towards defraying the expenses connected with the Temple services. The collectors of the tax came

* *Vide* Ebrard's 'Gospel History,' p. 344.

† Rom. i. 4.

to Peter and asked if his Master paid it or not, and he, without reflection, answered the question in the affirmative. The rashness of the answer is seen in the fact that they had not sufficient money to pay the tax, and if Peter had known this he could not know where it was to come from.

But when he was come into the house, the Lord, knowing what Peter had done, asked: 'Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom? of their children, or of strangers?' When Peter acknowledges that such kings take tribute of strangers, and not their children, our Lord brings him to the conclusion He wished to lead him to—namely, that the children, or 'sons,' are free. It is asked, How could Christ speak of 'sons' if He had Himself alone, as the only begotten Son of God, in view? He is not here speaking of the payment due to Cæsar, for our Lord could not say that He was a son of Cæsar. He speaks in the language of analogy, and expresses in words which would readily be understood by the disciples the grounds of exemption, in His own case, from the payment of this tax. As He is the Son of the King of kings, our Lord is exempted from taxes levied to keep up His Father's house. The analogy is: 'As there are many "kings of the earth," or as one king might have many sons, He naturally throws His speech into the plural form; and it is just as natural, when we come to the heavenly order of things which is there shadowed forth, to restrain it to the singular, to the only Son of God.' The Lord is not one among many brethren, but as the true Son of God He can lawfully claim exemption. We need, therefore, have no misgivings about the use of the word 'sons' instead of the word 'son.' With this kind rebuke to Peter, our Lord proceeds to find the money for the payment of the tax. Peter is to take, not his net, but a line with a hook;*

* This is the only occasion in the Gospels in which mention is made of fishing with a hook (Ebrard).

and, to show that our Lord did not need to pay tribute like an ordinary subject, but that, on the contrary, the whole world was subject to Him, its King, the first fish that should be caught would have a stater in its mouth (a coin sufficient to pay the tax levied upon two persons). It is observable, says the writer of the article 'Stater,' in Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible,' in confirmation of the minute accuracy of this Evangelist (Matthew), that at this period the silver currency of Palestine consisted of Greek imperial staters, or tetradrachms, and Roman denarii, of a quarter their value; didrachms having fallen into disuse. Had two didrachms been found by Peter, the receivers of tribute would hardly have taken them, and no doubt the ordinary coin paid was that miraculously supplied.

But, apart from this, three difficulties are expressed in connection with the account of this miracle: (1) How could the fish bite at a hook with a coin in its mouth? (2) There seems no purpose in the miracle, and it taught no great lesson? (3) How is it that the result of the command of Jesus to Peter is not recorded in the narrative?

With regard to the first, we are not going to waste space and time deciding whether the stater entered the fish's mouth as it was biting at the hook, or whether the stater may have come from the stomach into the mouth in the act of biting. Such profitless discussions we leave to those who have acumen and leisure enough. We might note that it is no uncommon occurrence for a fish to seize a bright object which might fall into the sea. A cod has been found with a watch in its stomach. The second difficulty can only be felt by one to whom such reasons as the want of money or a wish to strengthen Peter's faith are absurd.* Sufficient purpose is surely found in these, but, if others be asked for, there is in this miracle a reflection of the relation in which

* *Vide* Ebrard.

our Lord stood to the law, subject to it as man, yet fulfilling it by the power of His Divinity. He shows that all things are His and serve His purposes, even the fishes of the sea. In no better way could the Lord have taught them this lesson. The last difficulty, that the execution of the order given by our Lord is not expressly recorded, is no reason why the miracle should be doubted. Considering the character of Matthew's Gospel, as well as the attraction which the thing must have had for Peter, the execution in question is to be assumed as a matter of course.* True it is that no other case in the Gospels is found where a promised miracle is not recorded as an accomplished fact, but here the very silence is significant : it is the sublimest language.

DISPUTE AMONG THE DISCIPLES FOR PRECEDENCE (Matt. xviii. 1-35 ; Mark ix. 33-50 ; Luke ix. 46-50).

Although our Lord had endeavoured, on their return from their trial mission, to break down the sensuous expectations which the disciples entertained about His Messiahship and kingdom, we find the same hopes and ideas still prevailing, even towards the close of His Galilean ministry. On the way back to Capernaum from their northern tour they had disputed among themselves respecting their relative rank in the kingdom of God. After their arrival in Capernaum our Lord (probably in Peter's house), who had learned of the controversy in some way, proceeded to answer their disagreement, intending to show them how unworthy of His disciples such a dispute must be. We can only conjecture the origin of this question, but it is not improbable that the favour shown to Peter, James, and John, or the words addressed to Peter at Cæsarea Philippi, or both together, may have been sufficient to account for the controversy.

The Lord not only rebuked them, but also took a little

* Meyer.

child, placed him in their midst, and said, 'Let this child be your model; for here is typified humility and trustfulness, both necessary attributes of members of My kingdom.'* Moreover, 'whosoever shall receive one of such children in My name receiveth Me, and whosoever shall receive Me, receiveth not Me, but Him that sent Me.' Thus our Lord teaches them that the value of service depends upon the character of the one who does the service. The passage itself has no difficulties in it, but it has been confounded with a later dispute of the same character. In this case the question refers to the present, not to the future. Who is the greatest in his personal activities and personal qualities? In Luke xxii. 24 *et seq.* the question is rather concerning precedence in the Messianic kingdom when established.

A STRANGER WORKING MIRACLES IN THE NAME OF JESUS (Mark ix. 38-41; Luke ix. 49, 50).

It is not improbable that our Lord's remarks to His disciples were not at once understood, and so it was that John mentioned an instance which seemed inconsistent with the rule just laid down by our Lord. An unnamed man had been seen casting out devils in the name of Jesus,† yet he was not one of the chosen Twelve, nor did he follow them. Such work seemed outrageous to the disciples, and they sought to restrain him. The Lord perceived that even here were selfish motives protruding—a pride of position; only those who belonged to their select band were to use His name. The man who worked such miracles must at least have believed in our Lord as a prophet, if not as the Messiah, and was seeking to do good in His name. The Lord shows the Twelve that this is the great thing: for 'no man can do a miracle in My name which can lightly speak evil of Me.'

* Matt. xviii. 3.

† Mark ix. 38-41.

The common feature of these two incidents is this: our Lord shows that everything depends upon character, and the relation in which man stands to his Lord.

THE HEALING OF THE TEN LEPERS (Luke xvii. 11-19).

This case is unique, being the only one on record where our Lord wrought a miracle on behalf of a Samaritan. Not all the ten were Samaritans, but they were a mixed company of Jews and Samaritans, suffering from the common malady of leprosy. In obedience to the prescription of the law, they dare not approach near to the Lord, but timidly, yet earnestly, at a distance, cried out for relief. That cry may not have been a very loud one, because of the effects of their malady, but it was heard, and speedily answered. 'Go, show yourselves to the priest,' is the Divine command.

There is no doubt that the healing was connected with the strict condition laid down by the Lord. 'But,' we read, 'as they went they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks; and he was a Samaritan.' The meaning of these words of Luke would seem to be that the lepers found themselves healed soon after leaving the village, and a Samaritan, full of gratitude, did not go on to fulfil the command of our Lord, but hastened back to give utterance to it. If this be the right interpretation, then difficulties arise, and our Lord's words of commendation seem scarcely deserved. Would not these words of praise go as far as approving disobedience? for then the man did not go to the priests, but considered it unnecessary since he was healed. Schleiermacher saw the difficulty, and to obviate it supposed that it was not until after the lepers had been declared to be healed by the priest, and had brought the usual sacrifices, did the Samaritan turn back and thank Jesus. The remain-

ing nine he supposes to have been Jews, and probably these expected to meet the Lord at the feast in Jerusalem and thank Him then ; but the Samaritan followed the Samaritan custom, and went to the temple of Gerizim, where he could not expect to find Him again. But if this were so our Lord would have commended the one to the disadvantage of the others, merely because his gratitude, without being greater, was sooner expressed. This is most improbable.

We can best understand the incident as taking place thus : All the ten lepers went to the priests and offered the accustomed sacrifices ; for the fulfilment of our Lord's command was the condition of their restoration to health. Our Lord did not stand waiting idly in the town for the return of the ten, but probably halted there some days, which would give ample time for the Samaritan to make the journey to Jerusalem and back. After the priest had admitted that they were clean, nine forgot the Giver in the value of the gift, but the other turns back and speaks his gratitude by publicly thanking our Lord for the cure. Stier supposes that the priests in Jerusalem sought to keep back the restored lepers from returning to thank Jesus, and that this one only had withstood the opposition. This supposition is based upon one broached in the Berlenburg Bible, but has no real foundation.

HEALING OF THE MAN BORN BLIND (John ix. 1-38).

The last act of mercy during our Lord's ministry in Jerusalem was the healing of the man born blind. The miracle is recorded at some length by John, but the first three Evangelists pass it by without mention. This absence from three of the four Gospels may, perhaps, be accounted for by the circumstance that this miracle did not take place in Galilee—the sphere to which the first three Evangelists devoted most of their attention—but in Jerusalem of Judæa.

The miracle was wrought on the Sabbath, as our Lord

was leaving the Temple with His disciples. When they saw a blind man begging, the thought in the minds of the disciples, suggested by their Jewish conception of God and His ways, was, 'Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' To them both cases seemed possible, and they wished to know which of them was correct. The answer which our Lord gives shows the possibility of a third case, which they had overlooked, or deemed out of the question. 'Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.' Suffering is often the punishment of sin, but the disciples are here told that it can serve another purpose—a higher and more wholesome one.

Passing on from this statement, the Lord shows that through Himself the works of God are made manifest. He says: 'I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work.' The metaphor is one drawn from our everyday life: the day is for work, while the night, with its darkness, is for rest, and makes many kinds of work impossible. But, like all metaphors, it is misleading—if its application is driven too far. Dr. Paulus, together with Olshausen, endeavour to apply the words, 'The night cometh when no man can work,' to the work of our Lord's disciples, who cannot see the force of them, since it was not till after the departure of Christ that the Apostles strictly began to work. To reason thus is to miss the main point of the metaphor. Our Lord did not affirm 'The night cometh when no other man can work'—*i.e.*, in which no work be done—but, in the words of Trench, 'No man who has not done his work in the day can do it in the night; for him the time cometh in which he cannot work; and Christ does not exclude even Himself from the law.'* As long as life remains that is the

* *Vide* Trench on the Miracles, p. 317 (twelfth edition).

opportune time and the 'day' for activity; the 'night' cometh, which is the inopportune moment—the time of death and cessation from activity. Then, preparing them for the miracle which He is about to work in the man, He says: 'I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day. . . . As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.'

In this miracle our Lord makes use of clay softened by spittle to anoint the eyes of the blind man, but for what reason John does not say. The procedure was not, as Ewald thinks, adopted merely for the purpose of defying the hierarchy because it was the Sabbath, nor are we justified in attributing a medicinal nature to the clay. Weststein, Lightfoot, and Tacitus all tell of the ancient belief in saliva as a cure for disorders in the eyes. Clay, too, though less commonly, was supposed to work cures on inflamed eyes. Elsewhere in the Gospels our Lord uses spittle to heal a blind man,* and to heal a deaf and dumb man,† but here we must view the spittle and clay as means of healing—the channel to convey His power. It was not essential to the healing of the man—*cf.* Matt. ix. 27-30; Mark x. 46 *et seq.*; Matt. xx. 20 *et seq.*—but when a medium was so used it was for a purpose, either stated or implied. What was the purpose of the clay and spittle in this miracle? Some of the early Fathers express the opinion that the blind man had no eyes, and that Jesus formed them out of the clay, as God at first formed man from the earth.‡ Ammon thinks the clay was here used as a medicine to cure inflammation of the eyes; Lücke thinks it was merely to awaken faith that the clay was used; and Calvin inclines to the view that the purpose was to test the man's faith. Other explanations might be stated, but the most probable one is that the use of the clay

* Mark viii. 23.

† *Ibid.*, vii. 33.

‡ Irenæus, Nonnus, and Theodore, etc.

was to help the faith of the blind man. A man of weak faith is greatly helped when he can perceive the media of his cure, and that faith is even more appreciably helped if the media seem to be appropriate.

This done, the man is bidden to go to the Pool of Siloam and wash off the clay, and when he had done this he saw. This washing in Siloam is no more to be regarded as 'medicinal prescription' than the application of the clay mixed with saliva. The Pool of Siloam seems to have been chosen, not because of any special efficacy supposed to rest in its water, but probably because it was nearest to the scene of the miracle, and, as certainly, also well known to the blind man. But what was the significance of this washing? The special significance of the man's being sent to the Pool of Siloam lay in the circumstance that it was in John's mind a symbol of our Lord. The name of the pool is, by interpretation, 'Sent,' and our Lord was the 'Sent' of God. To the populace this was difficult of belief; but He whom they had seen grow up from childhood among them, He the son of a carpenter of Nazareth, is none other than the 'Sent' of God. So it was the Pool of Siloam; it was a small, insignificant pool, yet it is one of the media of this man getting his eyesight. He had known it from childhood, and, with all his acquaintance, he remained blind; but now that which has been within his reach since he was a boy is the instrument through which our Lord will give him sight. It was to this man 'sent' of God, and by his obedience it was made, not only an evidence of his faith, but also the channel of God's grace towards him. With the subsequent attempts of the Sanhedrin to corrupt and alarm the restored blind man, and also Christ's further conversation and dealing with him, we will not deal here, but will now address ourselves to the appointment and mission of the Seventy.

THE MISSION OF THE SEVENTY (Luke x. 1-16).

Luke's Gospel is the only one which records the selection of the Seventy, but this is no reason for questioning the account. Matthew is silent concerning the choice of the Twelve, and John passes over unnoticed their mission ; yet we are not warranted on these grounds in refusing to accept the mission and choice of the Twelve as authentic facts of history. The Evangelists did not attempt to give a detailed account of our Lord's life, and on this temporary and special appointment of the Seventy we can well understand their silence. Our Lord had—as we learn from Acts i. 15-21 and 1 Cor. xv. 6—numerous professed followers, besides the chosen Twelve—a band undoubtedly numbered by hundreds rather than by dozens, and from among this great number He would easily be able to choose seventy for any special work or training to which He wished to call them. Gfrörer infers from the fact that (1) in 1 Cor. xv. 6 Jesus is represented as appearing first to the Twelve, and then to five hundred, whereas no allusion is made to the Seventy ; and (2) also that Eusebius says : 'The names of the Seventy are not known,' that they can never have existed at all !* Truly a strange way of reasoning !

Most of the difficulty attached to this incident centres in the number of the disciples chosen. The number 'seventy' reminds us of the elders appointed by Moses,† of the seventy members of the Sanhedrin, or of the seventy languages and nations, which were supposed by the Jewish theologians to cover the face of the earth. But we are to understand the number 'seventy' as either a round number, which it frequently is, or as the exact number of the men selected by our Lord.‡ De Wette and others imagine that because Moses chose seventy elders it necessarily follows that if our Lord did select

* Quoted by Ebrard, p. 323.

† Num. xi. 16, etc.

‡ *Vide* Ebrard, p. 322.

the seventy disciples He did it to imitate Moses. On this Ebrard remarks: 'According to the opinion of these gentlemen, when Jesus was about to collect a large circle of disciples, if just seventy individuals offered themselves, He ought to have carefully avoided taking that number, lest certain critics, eighteen centuries afterwards, should think that He had wasted His time in seeking for every significant number.' This is certainly very forcible. The next difficulty appears in the instruction given to the Seventy; it is said that they are just the same as those given to the Twelve.* This looks as if the choice of the Seventy were only an imperfect account of the choice and commission of the Twelve. On the contrary, we maintain that they are two separate incidents, and differ in many and important respects. The address to the Twelve has in it all the character of an induction into a permanent office, whilst that given to the Seventy evidently consists of instructions for a temporary and special work. The purpose of this latter mission was, not to further the personal confidence in our Lord of those who were sent,† but to prepare by miraculous cures and by preaching for the imminent work of the Messiah. A study of the address given on each occasion shows this to have been so. In the address to the Twelve allusion is made to persecutions that were to arise—the design of the Apostolic office is pointed out;‡ but in the address to the Seventy we find nothing like this. It is true that our Lord compares them to sheep sent among wolves, but this shows the late date of the incident, and that the opposition of the Pharisees had greatly increased in violence. No further reference is made to any actual persecution, or to the necessity for confessing our Lord in the midst of tribulation. The entire resemblance, therefore, reduces itself to this—that they were prohibited from providing temporal comforts for their

* Matt. x.

† *Vide* Hase and Meyer.

‡ Matt. x. 22, 23.

journey, and the same mode of action is prescribed to them as previously was prescribed to the Twelve.* To decide from so trivial resemblance that this mission of the Seventy is a mere imitation of that of the Twelve is indeed 'an arrogant and presumptuous criticism.'

THE QUESTION OF DIVORCE (Matt. xix. 3-12;
Mark x. 2-12).

As our Lord could stay no longer in Jerusalem with safety He retired to Peræa, beyond Jordan. Here the sick and curious crowded around Him, and 'He healed them there.' On one occasion the Pharisees sought to involve Him in difficulty regarding the question of divorce. The difficulty of the question lay in the fact that this topic was the bone of contention between the school of Hillel and that of the more rigorous Shammai. There is not sufficient evidence in the text for the idea that this was an attempt to get an expression from Jesus which would arouse Herod Antipas against Him. John the Baptist had been arrested and imprisoned because he dared to protest against Herod's marriage with Herodias; and Peræa was within that prince's domains. The view is very tempting, and suggestive that here the questioners wished our Lord to express an opinion opposed to the matrimonial relations of Antipas, and so involve Him in a fate similar to that of John; but there is not sufficient foundation for this view. What was expected was that He would declare in favour of the views of one or the other school, so that they might be able from this declaration to stir up party feeling against Him. The popular view was that of the school of Hillel, and this had already exerted a bad influence upon the people.

The attempt to entrap our Lord was not successful. He set aside the lax views of marriage held by the school of

* *Vide Ebrard.*

Hillel, but He did it in the language of Holy Writ, which they could not gainsay. 'Have ye not read, that He which made them in the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife : and they twain shall be one flesh ?'* Moreover, He set aside the wrong interpretation of the Mosaic law, as given by the school of Shammai, asserting that they had missed the standpoint from which such legislation was given, and took them back to the ideal which is found 'in the beginning' of society. He declared that marriage is an indissoluble union by which two persons are joined into one whole, constituting one life : 'They twain are one flesh.' In fact, our Lord's decision in this peculiar case shows the entire relation of Judaism to Christianity—'there, condescension to a rude condition of the natural man, which could not be removed by outward means ; here, the restoration of that which was in the beginning.'†

Keim insists that our Lord breaks with Moses, because Moses allowed a bill of divorcement to be given, and thus the marriage might be annulled. As we have already stated, Moses stoops to meet the rude condition of the people in order to bring about order and to promote morality. Our Lord, on the other hand, here states the ideal which must be realized, declaring that the man and wife are 'joined together by God,' and it is unlawful to put them asunder. Moses gave permission on the part of the civil law on account of their hardness ; but such permission was no approbation.‡ Our Lord viewed the marriage bond as an ordinance of God, and every divorce (except where the bond has been already broken by the sin of adultery) is sin against the seventh commandment.

Our Lord's words on the subject of divorce led the disciples to think that it was better not to marry at all.

* Matt. xix. 4, 5. † *Vide* Neander, p. 362. ‡ *Vide* Ebrard, p. 351.

'No doubt,' said our Lord, 'there are some who for the kingdom of heaven's sake have remained unmarried.' No rule is laid down for all men to fall in with, only He is describing an existing state of facts, distinguishing those who adopt this state of life for the kingdom of heaven's sake from those who are celibates because they regard celibacy as meritorious in itself. Strauss lays hold of this to affirm that the Lord teaches 'Essenic asceticism.' 'But it is not certain,' says Ebrard in reply, 'that the Essenes did regard celibacy as meritorious on account of its purity, in spite of the arguments of Gfrörer; for Josephus and Philo both agree in attributing the celibacy of the sect to contempt for the female sex.'* This section of our Lord's teaching must be taken in connection with all His work and words, and it will be found to harmonize with the general spirit of the Master and the Apostles. 'His decision, therefore, was opposed not only to the old Hebrew notion that celibacy was *per se* ignominious, but also to the ascetic doctrine which made it *per se* a superior condition of life, a doctrine so widely diffused in later times. It involves His great principle that the heart and disposition must be devoted to the interests of the kingdom of God, and for it a man must voluntarily modify all the relations of life as necessity may require.'†

THE RICH YOUNG RULER (Matt. xix. 16-30 ;
Mark x. 17-31 ; Luke xviii. 18-30).

When leaving Peræa, after the close of His ministry there, a young ruler of the synagogue, a man of wealth and blameless life, came running and kneeling down to our Lord, and asked what remained for him to do to inherit eternal life. Matthew's is the only narrative which says he was a young man, and this is hard to harmonize with his arrogant language, 'All these have I kept from my youth.' The

* *Vide* Ebrard, p. 351. † *Vide* Neander's 'Life of Jesus Christ,' p. 364.

words 'from my youth' are omitted in some good manuscripts* and by most modern critics, but they are retained as being of high authority, being found in some versions and Fathers, and also in the parallel passages of Mark and Luke. Although it cannot be said to be entirely improbable that he was a youth—for the tone of his conversation is more that of a young man than of an old one—yet the text demands us to view him as one advanced in years, and one who had a self-righteous confidence, founded on a life blameless from his youth.

Then comes his question : 'Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?' The Lord replied : 'Why callest thou Me good? None is good save One, that is, God.' Here arises a difficulty, for why should our Lord decline the predicate 'good'? Yet it is not strange that He rejected the epithet; it is rather in keeping with His entire character that He should seem to decline it. We cannot say that the Lord actually declined the epithet. He has a lawful right to claim it as peculiarly His; but before it is accepted from the lips of man He would be sure that the user of such words understands what he is speaking about. 'God is good in a sense which can be predicated of no creature.' To apply such a title to our Lord is to affirm that He is God. But did the young ruler know this? Did he believe that the One he now addressed was no other than the incarnate Lord? Here the opportunity is afforded to teach this man these truths, and to lead him on to not only head knowledge, but to a higher knowledge which should make him see the insufficiency of his own morality and the righteousness which is 'of the law.' Truly this is the motive which inspires our Lord to appear to decline a title which none but He can rightly claim.

If it be eternal life that is sought after, then 'keep the

* *E.g.*,  B. L.

commandments,' says our Lord to the impulsive questioner. As a Jew, he must know what they are, and to keep them is all that the law demands. Without hesitation he replies: 'All these have I kept from my youth.' True, most scrupulously he had observed the duties of the Decalogue, and had fulfilled its demands even to the letter. But even this left a void which required to be filled; therefore he asks, 'What lack I yet?' He had kept the law to the letter, yet still there was not satisfaction. Why? Because there is more than the letter: there is the spirit. What of the spirit of the law; that higher meaning which alone can win Divine favour and confer a sense of satisfaction upon the one who keeps the law? Was there with him that true fulfilment of the law which requires a sense of God's holiness, and therefore presupposes the existence of the all-essential love in the specified duties mentioned? * If this experience belongs to the ruler, then he can truly be said to have entered 'into life.'

OUR LORD AND HEROD (Luke xiii. 31-35).

Whilst still in Peræa word is brought by the Pharisees to our Lord that Herod desired to kill Him. But it is not quite clear at first sight whether the message of the Pharisees was inspired by Herod himself or whether they made use of Herod's name to try to rid Peræa of our Lord's troublesome presence. From the fact that the Lord sent a message to Herod—a message containing an expression which showed that He well understood Herod's crafty and cunning character and aims—we must infer that the message of the Pharisees was not solely their own. On what grounds Herod sought to kill Jesus is not known, for, according to Luke, he had only shown an earnest desire to see Him; † and when, at a later time, that desire was gratified, a great joy at seeing Him. Although he had the opportunity of

* Matt. xix. 18, 19.

† Luke ix. 9.

condemning the Lord to die, yet he sent Him back to Pilate without any verbal reproach or censure. But it is not to be supposed that the feelings and views of a man like Herod Antipas would not change under changing circumstances and times. Like John the Baptist, our Lord had won the favour and respect of not a few, and He had everywhere sown the seeds of a high moral and religious tone among the people, which could not but be viewed with apprehension by a man of Herod's profligate and debased life. Here is an instance of this uneasiness. Why did he not command as a King that our Lord should leave Peræa? The term 'fox'—the symbol of craftiness—is rightly applied to him. But we are also disposed to the opinion that the Pharisees themselves displayed great craftiness in bringing the report of Herod to the Lord. Both they and Herod were altogether alike, and acted in concert to bring about His downfall and to put an end to His work. Probably they hoped that He would leave Peræa and return to Judæa, where He might more easily be destroyed by the leaders of the Jews.

The answer of the Lord to the Pharisees is very enigmatical: 'Go tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless, I must walk to-day and to-morrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.' It is probable that the expressions 'to-day and to-morrow' and 'the third day' are general expressions,* and that our Lord here means to say that He will stay in Peræa for a short time longer and finish what He has begun. His work was so near completion that not even Herod can interfere with or stay it. To the Lord the end of His earthly ministry appeared not far off; for the animosity of the people, not only in Jerusalem, but also here in Peræa, showed that soon it would burst into flame and endeavour to destroy Him

* Cf. Hosea vi. 2.

and His influence. The words 'It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem' are to be understood as those of terrible irony.* He did not mean to express a general and unalterable law, but only to characterize strikingly the persecuting spirit of the hierarchical party of Jerusalem, to which the witnesses of the truth must always fall victims.†

DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF LAZARUS (John xi. 1-46).

On the banks of the Jordan, in Peræa, our Lord received news concerning the sickness of Lazarus, and also a request that He would come at once to his relief. The incident is one of the most debated among the many in our Lord's busy earthly life, nearly every point in the narrative—and, in fact, the whole narrative—being called in question by one or other theologian.

Men who deny the possibility of miracles think they can prove this incident to be a masterpiece of allegorical fiction, and Strauss has employed all his wit and acuteness to expose its composition by his analysis of the details. On this Weiss observes: 'No one can ever understand why so great an artist as the author of the story, which even Keim calls "grand and touching," should work so laboriously with strange materials, instead of proceeding with a free hand. If Jesus was to be represented as the absolute principle of life, all that was required was that the man should really be dead, and the paltry reckoning of the days he had already lain in the grave, or the establishing the fact of death by the commencing decomposition, was completely superfluous in an age ever prone to believe in the miraculous—an age which did not at once plead a trance as the cause, as does a criticism ever on the look-out for doubts. In his eagerness to prepare everything for the last great effect the inventor has

* *Vide* Farrar in the 'Cam. Greek Test. for Schools.'

† *Vide* Neander, p. 357.

surely completely frustrated his purpose.* To deny the ability of our Lord to work miracles is to put one's self beyond the pale of possibility to believe this, the culminating point of our Lord's miraculous activity—the most splendid and important of all the miracles. The next question is, 'Did Lazarus die, or merely fall into a trance?' It was no part of our Lord's regular work to bring the dead to life; for such opportunities would never have been wanting. Is it probable that the case of Lazarus, remembering the dangers from the Jewish custom in Oriental lands of precipitate burial, was one of apparent death? The words of our Lord appear to bear this meaning, and, if Lazarus actually died, need explanation. For example, we find the Lord saying: 'This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God'; and again: 'Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep.' The disciples, with the messenger, would most assuredly infer from such language that Lazarus would not die, and that his recovery from sickness was to be the cause of glory being given to God, either because our Lord had foretold it or prayed for it. But the true meaning was that the final upshot of this sickness was not to be the death of Lazarus, but that it was to be the glory of God, in order that our Lord, as Son of God, might be made manifest.† As Meyer expresses it, Lazarus 'shall not fall a prey to death (*πρὸς θάνατον*), as death usually is, so that no re-awakening takes place,' but that this sickness is so timed that by or in it the Son of God may be glorified. The Lord spoke of death in the familiar Jewish as well as Christian sense; but here it has a new meaning, for He, as Prince of Life, is conscious of His power to triumph over it and to raise Lazarus to life again. To Him death has no more power or terror than sleep—in fact, they are twin sisters. Such would seem to be the only right meaning of

* Weiss, vol. iii., p. 212.

† *Vide* Edersheim, vol. ii., p. 313.

our Lord's words ; for if we assume a merely apparent death or a trance we oppose ourselves to the style and purpose of the narrative, which is distinguished for its tenderness and truthfulness, and also to the character of our blessed Lord Himself.* Now we must take up another question : Why did our Lord allow His friend Lazarus to die ? Was it to prove the faith of the sisters, and then change their grief into greater joy ? or perhaps in order to reveal His glory more gloriously ? John seems to say nothing about the educational purpose, but rather describes the object as being to glorify Himself. Lücke supposes that Jesus was busily engaged at the time in the work of peculiar importance in Peræa, and if such were not the case, then the Lord's conduct was 'purely arbitrary and capricious.' We take exception to this supposition, for our Lord might have returned to Peræa after He had cured Lazarus, or He might have cured Lazarus from a distance, as He cured the centurion's servant and the nobleman's son.† Is it not probable that there was a twofold reason for not coming to the aid of Lazarus as soon as the messenger arrived ? In accordance with His Father's will our Lord had left Jerusalem, where His life was in the utmost danger, and that which was dedicated to the fulfilment of His sacred mission He dared not risk for friendship's sake. We see in it a sacrifice to His calling of His heart's most ardent desires, when, after receiving the message, He remained quietly for two days in the same place.‡ A second reason for this delay is that expressed by the Evangelist John—viz., 'For the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.' Many (πολλοὶ) of the Jews who saw the miracle believed on Him,§ and thus our Lord's end was attained.

When the Lord reached Bethany, Lazarus had been in the grave four days. As soon as Martha heard of His arrival,

* *Vide* Meyer on John.

† *Cf.* Ebrard, p. 354.

‡ *Cf.* Weiss, pp. 206, 207.

§ John v. 45.

she went to meet Him, and told the Lord that Lazarus would not have died if He had only been there. 'But,' says Jesus, 'thy brother shall rise again'—words pointing to the miracle He was now about to work. To Martha, whose faith was so shaken that she forgot the Lord's miraculous power, they seemed to refer to the general resurrection as taught by our Lord. Mary, who was not yet aware that the Lord had arrived, was brought now by Martha to the place in which our Lord then was. When she saw Him she fell at His feet weeping, and her companions with her. Jesus, when He saw her weeping, groaned in the spirit, and wept with them all. What is the meaning of this? Why did our Lord weep? Was it because He was not sure of effecting a miracle? Or is Baur's supposition true that 'it must have been for the loss of His friend'? It is not improbable that many things connected with the death of Lazarus conspired to bring grief to the mind of Jesus here. There may have entered into that sorrow of the Lord a regret at the power of death over humanity—a power which could not be stayed altogether, even though Lazarus be raised again. Once our Lord may defy that power and stay its operation, but Lazarus should succumb at a later period to its assaults, as is the case with every man. Here was that monster He was going to subdue. The sting should be taken away and its horrors removed, but only after the Lord had tasted of its deepest horrors and drunk its venom to the very dregs. But this is not all. The word used in verse 33 to express our Lord's emotion suggests, not sorrow, but indignation (*Ἐμβριμᾶσθαι*).* What was He angered at? It was the hypocritical lamentations of His enemies the Jews and the unbelief displayed both by them and Mary in His power to raise Lazarus from the dead. They would not have given

* The word also occurs in Mark i. 43, xiv. 5; Matt. ix. 30; and John xi. 38.

themselves over to tears and mourning if they had believed in His love towards them and readiness at all times to help them. Thus in these tears we see pity, disappointment, and indignation.

At the grave-mouth our Lord showed His dependence upon His Father, and acknowledged that the power He was about to exhibit was His in common with the Father. Four days Lazarus had been in the grave when Jesus came, and Martha reminds Him that decomposition must have begun. Still, the Lord bade them open the tomb and let Him see the corpse. Before the open tomb, and assured that Lazarus would rise again, He prayed, thanking God that He had, as always, heard Him; and then He adds, 'Because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast heard Me.' This prayer has been characterized by Strauss as a 'sham prayer,' leaving us to infer that our Lord was guilty of double-dealing and of playing the hypocrite—an inference Strauss would not, for a moment, subscribe to. What was the meaning of it? The situation requires us to think that previously our Lord had offered up prayer to God—probably a prayer for a blessing to attend the raising of Lazarus. Here is recorded the thanks to God for hearing that prayer. We are not justified in regarding this thanksgiving as anticipatory—as Hengstenberg regards it—nor as though He offered thanks in anticipation of the hearing of His prayer;* but the Lord expressly states that His thanks were offered—'Because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast heard Me.' But would not this make it merely a reflection on the power of God or an insincere prayer? Meyer replies: 'It is just He, the One who is most intimate with the Father, who may indulge in reflection even in prayer, if His reflections

* As Ewald suggests. Quoted by Meyer.

relate to God and are prayer.' To those who stood around it was conclusive that the working of the miracle took place in the strength of God, which dwelt within His Son. This prayer has led some to distinguish this miracle from others as one not wrought by the Divine power dwelling in our Lord, but by God for Him ; in other words, to regard it as an answer to prayer. But as our Lord always acted in harmony with His Father, and as depending upon Him, He could have expressed Himself in the same words in regard to any of the miracles.* Besides which, it is not improbable that here were special circumstances which called forth this public testimony of His power to work in God's name and by virtue of His office as Messiah.

Only one question remains : Why do not the other Evangelists, or some of them, make any allusion to this miracle ? Or rather, Why are all the other Evangelists silent about the raising of Lazarus, which was an event so influential in its results on the final phase of the life of Christ ? The answer is similar to the one already given to account for the silence or notice given by some Evangelists to several incidents we have already considered. The first three Evangelists record only—up to the time of our Lord's entrance into Jerusalem, during the last week before His crucifixion—the incidents of His work in Galilee, and, generally, those which took place at a remote distance from Jerusalem. This is the 'allotted province' of the first three Gospels, and this would include the Galilean risings from the dead, but exclude that of Lazarus. John's Gospel, on the other hand, is more occupied with the events of the Judean ministry of the Lord, and in His choice of miracles includes this, which is most closely connected with the last great period of the history, the raising of Lazarus. This explanation seems to answer all the objections raised against

* *Vide* Neander, p. 378.

the genuineness of this incident, and spares us from having recourse to the supposition of the tender considerations towards the family at Bethany (Epipharius)—a supposition which leaves us with greater difficulties yet to be explained.

CHAPTER VII

THE LAST WEEK AND CRUCIFIXION

THE LAST SABBATH (Matt. xxvi. 6-13; Mark xiv. 3-9; John xii. 2-11).

MOST commentators agree in saying that the supper in the house of Simon the leper and the anointing of Mary took place on the Saturday preceding the crucifixion—the Jewish Sabbath. The incident has many similarities to the feast given by Simon the Pharisee; but the points of difference have already been noticed, which make it impossible to regard the several accounts of the Evangelists as referring to one incident. The name of the hosts are the same on both occasions, but this one here is distinguished by the epithet, ‘the leper.’ In all probability he had formerly been a leper, but after his healing continued to be known by that epithet. He has been supposed by Ewald to have been the deceased father of the family of which Lazarus and Mary were members. Lange and Ebrard regard him as some other relation or friend, or even the landlord of the house in Bethany where Lazarus and his sisters lived. Beyond his name and acquaintance with Lazarus we know nothing about him.

The event which made this supper memorable was the act of Mary; she anointed the Lord’s feet with a pound of ointment, and afterwards wiped them with her hair, as He reclined at the table. The value of the ointment was about £9 15s., and some of the disciples murmured at the

apparent waste. Here occurs a discrepancy in John's Gospel as compared with Matthew's and Mark's. The latter state that the disciples murmured, whilst John says, 'One of His disciples, Judas Iscariot,' complained. It may have happened that Judas simply gave utterance to an observation in which the others innocently concurred, or that several of them gave evidence of murmuring, and Judas was the most prominent with his words of disapprobation. It is not hard to see that here is no contradiction, merely an amplification by John of the earlier accounts of Matthew and Mark.

Another difficulty is found in Martha's act of serving at supper. Matthew and Mark state that the supper took place in the house of Simon the leper. John tells us that Lazarus was one of the guests. If so, the house in which the supper was held was not the house of Lazarus. But if Martha served, it must have been in Lazarus' house and not Simon's. Such reasoning, if reasoning it can be called, is both shallow and pointless. 'Simon's house' does not necessarily mean that Simon occupied it at that time. Again, if Simon did occupy the house, is it a strange thing that he should ask his relative or friend, Martha, to help him in the management of a little friendly supper? Where is the difficulty?

It might be asked, How is it that the person anointing our Lord is not only not named by Matthew and Mark, but is not even introduced as if 'she belonged to the family of the host'? The reason, why John gives her name, is that the reader was already acquainted with her, a circumstance which was unknown, probably, to Matthew and Mark.*

Mary's act brought to maturity the thoughts of treason that were brooding in the soul of Judas. He was a disappointed and embittered man, and was beginning to seek

* *Vide* Ebrard's 'Gospel History.'

vengeance upon those who had kept him poor, and offered him spiritual gifts in the stead of earthly gifts.

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM (Matt. xxi. 1-11; Mark xi. 1-14; Luke xix. 28-40; John xii. 12-16).

On the day following, early in the morning, the multitude, who had heard of the raising of Lazarus from the dead, left Jerusalem for Bethany to meet the Lord, whom they heard was coming to Jerusalem. When between Bethany and Bethphage, on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, He directed two of His disciples to go into the village, which lay a little farther on, and from thence bring to Him a she ass, and a foal of an ass that had never been ridden. They should find them tied, but no one would refuse to allow them to go, if the disciples replied, 'The Lord hath need of them!' This was done, the animals were loosed, and when the disciples had spread their clothes upon them, the Lord mounted the foal. In the opinion of some writers, our Lord here works a miracle in order to procure the animals—an idea not found in John's narrative. It seems better to understand the transaction as one which the Lord had previously provided against. There is nothing in the narrative against the view that the owner of the asses was a friend of Jesus, and that what He told the disciples they should find had been arranged with him, to serve as a sign between them. It has been suggested that the village mentioned was Bethany, and that Jesus may have seen the asses as He left the village in the morning. If so, here is further testimony for regarding the securing of them as non-miraculous.

Matthew's narrative represents our Lord as sitting, not only on one ass, but upon both.* It would seem almost unnecessary to explain that this is not so, were it not that Strauss, Volkmar, and others interpret the act in this way,

* Matt. xxi. 7.

and use it against the genuineness of Matthew's account. The devout mind at once understands the meaning underlying the apparent ambiguity of the passage—a meaning which is obvious. Both asses had garments spread upon them, for the disciples were uncertain which of them the Lord intended to ride; and when all was ready He mounted the foal, and the mother walked by its side. There may seem no reason why the Lord should have increased the difficulty of riding by choosing a foal that had never been ridden—as yet unbroken, and probably unweaned. Strauss finds it a source of amusement, and says that the Lord 'must have made the foal run steadily by His Divine omnipotence.' But was not the symbol in the prophecy of Zechariah, which our Lord here appropriates, a reason for this? Or, again, was the task a hard one? As Lange reminds us, is there not 'a period in the life of such an ass when for the first time he is ridden there is no risk for him or his rider, and that, according to the intimation of the Evangelists, this period had just arrived for this colt?*' In the presence of the mother of the colt, do we not see a means carefully chosen of guiding and restraining it?

The question naturally arises: Was the triumphal entry into Jerusalem a preconceived plan, or did it arise from the circumstances of the journey? The kingdom our Lord came to establish is not 'of this world,' nor is it to be regarded in a political sense. Had this been so, then this act of the Lord may have been a final effort to publicly establish it among men. Rather let it be regarded as an effort to assure men that the kingdom of God had come, and He was the promised theocratic King. Not seated on a fiery war-horse, but on a lowly ass, He, as Prince of Peace, now publishes His claim to the Messiahship—a step which the proximity of His death now made imperative and involved no risk.

* Lange, vol. iii., p. 34.

THE BARREN FIG-TREE (Matt. xxi. 18-22 ; Mark xi. 12-14, and xi. 20-26).

That night our Lord went out to Bethany, and stayed there till the morning. On his way back to Jerusalem He felt hungry, and seeing a fig-tree in the distance having leaves, He went to it, hoping to find figs to satisfy His hunger. Not a fig was to be found on it. Then, to show in a figure His instinctive aversion to a barren profession, but not in a blind passion, He pronounced upon it the curse that it should bring forth no fruit for ever.

It is possible with most, if not all, of our Lord's miracles to explain them away, and by natural means account for what, in the Gospels, is attributed to Divine agency. This miracle is no exception, and the rationalist has not been slow in finding some natural cause for what by Matthew and Mark is attributed to the Divine working of our Lord. The fact that the tree had leaves at so early a day, and also that it had no fruit, suggests that its life was not normal but, in some wise, diseased. It is possible, then, that its withering away was due to some natural cause. If so, its fate was a providential confirmation of the word of Jesus—so reasons Gilbert. Paulus supposes that our Lord merely foresaw that the tree was about to die, while Neander is of opinion that Jesus only hastened by His influence a decay already commenced. But such explanations are not only opposed to the application which is made by our Lord of the event, but are also antagonistic to the Evangelists' narrative. The difficulties of the miracle are many, but here space only allows the consideration of three. First, it is asked, As the earliest figs are not ripe till June, how could our Lord conscientiously hope to find figs in the beginning of April? The answer is found briefly in the words of Mark, 'Seeing a fig-tree afar off having leaves,' and the same allusion by

Matthew, to the fact that the tree had leaves upon it. It is sufficiently well known that the fig-tree shoots out first the fruit, and then, afterwards, the leaves. If leaves have reached a certain size, and are many, it may reasonably be expected that there will be at least some ripe figs too. With this tree it was not so, and such expectations were not realized. There was every promise of fruit, yet the tree had not only no ripe fruit, but no fruit at all. Secondly, it is argued, if, as Mark says, 'the time of figs was not yet,' how could our Lord curse the tree for having none? We answer: 'The Lord did not curse the tree because it had no fruit, but because it seemed to have fruit when it had nothing but foliage. There was nothing unusual that a tree should have no figs before the season of figs; but it was irregular to have so much foliage without any fruit at all.

The third difficulty concerns the act of cursing a tree. It is urged that to curse a tree is purposeless, immoral, and a manifestation of unworthy passion. All sorts of reasons to account for the Lord's action have been given, but most of them, though well-meaning, have mistaken the right reason, and involve us in still greater difficulty. Mill thought to evade the difficulty by suggesting that Jesus only feigned as if He were seeking figs in order to do a miracle. To accept such an explanation would be to convict our Lord of deceit and fraud. Others urge that our Lord's action was to remove by a public display of His Divine power the offence occasioned by the exhibition of His human weakness in the hunger which unconsciously sought food: or, it was in order to strengthen the weak faith of the disciples for the events of Passion week. Perhaps it was not to hurt the tree so much as to inflict punishment upon the owner of the tree. All such reasons are fanciful, and miss the main point of the incident. The miracle is the only one of punishment that is recorded to have been wrought by the Lord, 'for in that

of the devils in the swine,' says Stier, 'there was no punishment, but only a permission.' It was done symbolically to a tree as a testimony for men. In Israel, among all the nations, was every indication of promise, and from that nation alone could fruit be expected ; but none was found, and the time of harvest was already past. All commentators agree in so regarding this symbolical act of the Lord. But there was more than this in the miracle. He showed His instinctive dislike to hypocrisy. The tree promised something extraordinary, yet it was only like the other trees, so it looked what it was not. That this one miracle of destruction should have been worked upon a barren professor is not without significance. And how much better to show this by a tree than by the life of a man !

THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE (Matt. xxi. 12-17 ;
Mark xi. 15-19 ; Luke xix. 45-48).

According to Andrews' chronology, it was on the same day as the cursing of the fig-tree that our Lord cleansed the Temple for the second time. The circumstances of the second cleansing so closely resemble those of the first, and a repetition of the event appears so improbable, that it occasions little surprise to find that many regard the two incidents as one and the same. The first cleansing—already noticed—occurred on the occasion of our Lord's first visit to Jerusalem after the commencement of His ministry. The time was the Feast of the Passover, A.D. 27. On the same feast of the year (A.D. 28) our Lord was probably* not present, and so there was time to allow the abuses to re-

* There is much diversity of opinion upon this subject. Lightfoot, Grotius, Robinson, Greswell, Wordsworth, and Andrews think Christ was present, whilst Farrar, Pressensé, Lange, Ewald, Ebrard, Westcott, Alford, Edersheim, Weiss, Meyer, Godet, Bengel, Browne, Tholuck, and Geikie think Christ was absent.

appear by the Passover of A.D. 29. The abuse having reappeared, there is no reason why He should not have repeated this purifying process, and that without any essential difference. The accompanying circumstances of both incidents are similar, because the incidents themselves were similar; whereas the supposition that the cleansing took place only on one occasion would necessarily involve a chronological derangement, extending to almost the whole period of His ministry—a derangement which can neither be fairly imputed to the Synoptical narrative, nor even thought of as far as John is concerned, whose testimony is that of an eye-witness.* This much is certain, that if the evil again showed itself, as it undoubtedly did, without fearing the wrath of the priests, or without fear of increasing the animosity of His enemies, our Lord would again repeat what He had done at the beginning of His ministry. Here arises the old question: ‘Why are not both purifications mentioned by one or more of the Evangelists?’ The first three Evangelists make mention only of the second purification, John only of the first. We may be able to account for the silence of the first three Evangelists by the length of time that intervened between the two incidents, and from the fact that Matthew, Mark, and Luke take no notice generally of what took place during the earlier visit to Judæa.† They commence their continuous history with the time when our Lord was in Capernaum. John traces the events of Christ’s life from the first Passover, so describes the first purification. Probably, for that reason, he saw no necessity to mention the second.‡ He follows out the inward growth of the feeling of hostility in the life of our Lord, but when ‘once he had mentioned the climax which it had reached in the determination to put Jesus to death,

* *Vide* Meyer on Matthew, vol. ii., p. 63.

† *Vide* Meyer.

‡ Ebrard, p. 379.

made it henceforth his sole purpose to describe the last discourses of the Lord—the last glorious shining of the light in the darkness.*

THE QUESTION OF AUTHORITY (Matt. xxi. 23-27 ;
Mark xi. 27-33 ; Luke xx. 1-8).

The same night our Lord returned to Bethany, but was found again in the Temple at Jerusalem on the next day. The day was spent teaching all who gathered around Him for to hear Him, and also dealing with the questions both of the sincere doubter and of the insincere. These questions were so many that the day has been called 'the day of questions.' The first of these questions recorded is the question of our Lord's authority.

It was an effort to destroy our Lord's influence with the people by showing that He was not an ordained member of the priesthood, as they themselves were, nor could He show proof that He was lawfully entitled to be called 'Rabbi.' His act of purging the Temple was still green in their memories, and His teaching reflected unpleasantly upon the hierarchical party, so that to question His authority and gain no definite answer was one way of taking revenge upon Him and of stirring up the people to clamour for His death. Two answers seemed possible to this question: either He would confess that He had no license from the Rabbis or ecclesiastical party, or He might fall back on His Messianic claims and assert His Divine mission. If either answer had been given it would have been used as a basis of a formal accusation against Him; for their purpose was to destroy Him. The unexpected thing happened, and their evil machinations were revealed by a counter question, to which they could give neither a yea nor a nay. He asked them the source of John's baptism.

* Ebrard, p. 379.

But what is the relationship between this question of the scribes and Pharisees and our Lord's question? What connection is there between the two questions? John the Baptist indicated Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. If John was Divinely appointed, then all these things which he spake of Jesus were true and inspired utterances. If, on the contrary, they should say John's mission was of men, then they would stir up the populace against themselves; 'for all people accounted John a prophet.' How completely were they discomfited! He convicted them as hypocrites; He exposed them as incompetent to judge of His authority; because they could not tell even the source of the authority of John; and He humbled them before the people by showing them to be afraid of the people.

PHARISEES QUESTION OUR LORD ABOUT TRIBUTE (Matt. xxii. 15-22; Mark xii. 13-17; Luke xx. 20-26).

A second attempt to gain advantage over the Lord was made on the same day by the Pharisees and Herodians. They were mutual enemies, with only this in common, that they felt our Lord's teaching and influence to tell against themselves. In all other respects they were diametrically opposed to each other—the one fiercely zealous for the law, the other utterly indifferent to religion, being merely a political party. Together they conjure up a very insidious question regarding the payment of tribute: 'Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not?' The dilemma seemed one from which there was no escape. Three answers He might give: 'It is not lawful;' 'It is lawful;' 'I cannot tell.' If He gave the first, then He would provoke the hostility of the Romans; if He gave the second, He would provoke the fanaticism of the Jews; if the third, then He would lose influence with the people, and class Himself along with the

scribes and Pharisees, from whom, but a few hours before, He had extracted the same answer.

His answer was not one of these three. He saw their malice and hypocrisy, and gave a reply which recognised both the claims of God and Cæsar. He did not evade their question, but, without exposing Himself to their malicious accusations, laid down a great and far-reaching principle. 'Render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's.' The coins they carried with them gave evidence that they owed something to Cæsar, and their duty to Cæsar could not conflict with their duty towards God. The answer astonished the bystanders, 'who marvelled and left Him, and went their way.'

SADDUCEES QUESTION ABOUT THE RESURRECTION (Matt. xii. 23-33; Mark xii. 18-27; Luke xx. 27-40).

The Sadducees now came forward with a question to try to show the inconsistency of the teaching of the resurrection from the dead. They had no belief in a resurrection themselves, and here attempt to reduce that doctrine to an absurdity. They do so by a case of a woman who had had seven husbands in succession. In the resurrection, to which of them would she belong? Our Lord met the case by showing that their conception of the resurrection and the resurrected state was nothing but a caricature of the actual condition of affairs. He showed them that in the resurrection people no longer marry, nor are given in marriage, nor is that life a repetition of this life; but that everything material and sexual is done away with, and men are as the angels. Because they assumed that the future life was but a repetition of the present order of things our Lord goes on to convict them of limiting the power of God, and says: 'Do ye not therefore err, because ye know . . . not the power of God?' They had started out with a false premise,

and when the Lord showed the falsity of it their whole case was gone.

The Lord follows up His simple teaching on this subject by giving Scripture proof that the dead are raised up again. If Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had died, never more to be raised, how could God still speak of Himself as their God after their decease? This is only conceivable on the supposition that annihilation had not taken place, but that they still lived—that is to say, they had been raised from death.

THE WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY (John vii. 53 to viii. 11).

The Pharisees had discovered that they were not likely to accomplish anything in union with the Herodians in the field of theocratic-political questions, so they once more join with the scribes in another attempt to find some ground for complaint in our Lord's attitude towards the law. It was whilst he was in the Temple that they brought to Him a woman taken in adultery, found in the very act. According to the law of Moses, the sin of adultery was punishable with death, but, according to Josephus, so numerous were the cases of incest and adultery during the Herodian age that the law was no longer put into force. Here they would see what opinion the Lord would pronounce on the culprit. If He said the woman ought to be stoned, then He would have come into harsh collision with the laxity of that age; if He said that the woman ought to be allowed to go free, then He laid Himself open to be accused as a breaker of the law. At first He gave no heed to their question, but 'stooped down and wrote with His finger on the ground.' What He wrote we cannot know, and conjectures profit us little. Michaelis views the act as symbolizing our Lord's favourite expression, 'As it is written.' Suffice it to say that the Lord here merely declines the office of magistrate which they would, even though insincerely, confer upon Him. He, by

His act, gives expression to words used on another occasion when His services were called upon: 'Man, who made Me a judge and divider over you?' His work was not to directly interfere with the social regulations of His day, but rather, by His spiritual teaching and influence, to indirectly inaugurate a new era of things, and to do away with all the inconsistencies and evil practices which then prevailed in the government of every land and city. Hengstenberg does not like the Lord's conduct on this occasion, and deems this procedure unworthy of His noble character and claims. It was undoubtedly an act showing contempt for those who conversed with Him, but the tempters deserved the contempt which the act implied.*

When they continued to ask Him, we read: 'He lifted Himself and said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."' The perplexity was then shifted on to their own heads; for who among them could say that He was free from sin—actual sin, not the sin of adultery specially? Ebrard thinks that this points to the licentiousness of the whole nation, including the questioners themselves; but our Lord could not presuppose the hierarchy as a whole, even with all its corruption of morals, guilty of unchastity because a woman had been found guilty of this sin. The tempters saw the awkwardness of their position, and one by one slunk away, and the woman was left alone with Jesus.

The Lord's attitude towards this woman cannot be construed as one condoning her sin or leaving her uncondemned. His words altogether assent to the assumption that she ought to be stoned. The woman must have trembled at His words, and for a moment have expected some of her accusers to come forward and drag her out to be stoned. But He knew that her enemies could not fail to understand His

* *Vide Meyer on John, vol. ii., p. 11.*

meaning, and at His words their consciences must have accused them of their own guilt. With regard to the woman, the Lord did not condemn her, but, as Augustine points out, her sin. He had not come to condemn, but to seek and save the lost; not to cast out sinners, but to lead them to repent of their sins.

Hengstenberg argues, from our Lord's attitude towards the woman, against the historical genuineness of the incident. When the Lord says to the woman, 'Neither do I condemn thee,' he views it as a formal acquittal, which, if true, was a glaring contradiction between the revelation given by Moses and that given by Himself. But these words of the Master were not a declaration of the forgiveness of her sin; for He does not say, 'Thy sin has been forgiven thee,' but He knew whether she were penitent or not, and accordingly says, 'Continue no longer in your sin.' Thus He dismisses her uncondemned, but with a positive exhortation to amend her life, and to show by her future conduct that she would lay hold on the forgiving grace of God.

THE GOSPEL TO THE GREEKS (John xii. 20-50).

It was while our Lord was in the Temple, on the Tuesday of Passion week, that 'certain Greeks' came to Him, being desirous to speak with Him. They came at the moment in which the Jews had finally broken with Him, and He had been constrained to denounce them as hypocrites and robbers. In the words of Bengel, it was 'the prelude to the transition of the kingdom of God from the Jew to the Gentile.' We are not told who these men were, nor whence they came; but tradition affirms that several attempts were made, notably by the King of Edessa, to induce our Lord to leave the ungrateful and bitter Jews, and take up His abode in some foreign Court, where He was assured of a honourable welcome. It may have been that these

Greeks were Ambassadors from such a Prince—for Greeks were to be found in every Court—and came on such an errand as this.* It was impossible for them to get to our Lord, because He was perhaps in one of the inner courts of the Temple, to which they, as Gentiles, were forbidden an entrance. At that time Philip happened to be passing through the court of the Gentiles, in which they now were, and, either by accident or through previous acquaintance with him, tell of their desire to 'see Jesus.' Their desire was one which perplexed Philip; for it appeared a bold step to attempt to break through the Temple regulations, and endeavour to bring these heathens to Jesus. He accordingly seeks advice and communicates the proposal to Andrew, and then both together tell Jesus.

On hearing this request, our Lord is forcibly reminded of His approaching death. These Greeks were but the first-fruits of that great harvest which was to follow His sufferings and death, and He says to Andrew and Philip, 'The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified.' That request to Him appeared an earnest of the great desires and yearnings of the Gentile world for the salvation which should be gained by His Death and Passion.

If their purpose was merely to get a view of our Lord, or to speak with Him, or to urge Him to go and dwell in their country, the Lord has for them a nobler blessing, and in the Parable of the Grain of Wheat tells them the condition of entrance into His kingdom and the only way of salvation, alike for Gentile and Jew. Nicodemus had been told that to gain the kingdom of God a man must die to himself, and be born again of water and the Holy Ghost. Everywhere death is the condition of life, or of 'more life and fuller.' It is so in the physical world, and in the spiritual world the same law is true. To these Greeks the Lord states in other

* *Vide* an article by Dr. S. Cox in the *Expositor* of 1884, vol. ii.

language this same law. 'The Son of man must die,' He says, 'that all men may have life, and that more abundantly.'

As He speaks to these Greeks after this fashion, His feelings are stirred to the depths, and one of those 'struggles of soul,' to which we have already alluded, begins to be aroused in Him. 'Now is My soul troubled,' He cries, 'and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour.' How intensely human such language is, as He contemplates His sufferings and death! He continues: 'Father, glorify Thy Name.' As He uttered these words, there 'came a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.'

What are we to understand by this voice? Was it thunder, which was conceived of by the Old Testament writers as the voice of the Lord?* or is it a myth, based on the Gentile interpretations of thunder as the voice of the gods?† The former view may appear an easy way of solving the difficulty, but against it must be brought the words of John,‡ who was himself an 'ear-witness.' Nor was he the only witness, for he says, 'The people therefore, that stood by, and heard.'§ Could he have said that the people heard only the thunder, and not the words, if he meant to describe a voice in the thunder, or a voice sounding with a noise like thunder? Further, the Lord Himself|| gives His testimony to the occurrence of an actual voice.

Those who incline to the mythical view impeach the veracity of John, but this is not the place to enter on a discussion of this great subject. The only reasonable interpretation we can arrive at is that a voice was heard issuing from heaven, and that the testimony of the Lord and John confirms this. This voice, though heard, was not understood by all, but, as was the case at the Baptism and Transfigura-

* Cf. Psalm xxix.

† Vide Wetstein.

‡ John xii. 28.

§ *Ibid.*, 29.

|| *Ibid.*, 30.

tion, only those whose hearts and lives were conditioned by belief in Him could receive and intelligently interpret this, a voice from God. To the unbelieving crowd it was as thunder and nothing more; to the believing, lost to outward and sensible impressions, it was not thunder, but the voice of God.

With this incident ended our Lord's public ministry.

THE LAST SUPPER (Matt. xxvi. 7-25; Mark xiv. 12-21; Luke xxii. 7-30; John xiii. 1-35).

Much controversy has arisen concerning the date of the Last Supper; able arguments being put forward for Thursday evening of Passion week, and equally able arguments being advanced to show that our Lord kept the Passover at the appointed time. Into this controversy we cannot now enter, but, after the chronology of Andrews, we will assume the time of this Last Supper as Thursday evening.*

All that day the Lord spent in Bethany, doubtless with Lazarus and his sisters and His own disciples. Some time during the day His disciples reminded Him of the Passover, and asked where they should prepare it. Unknown to them He had already arranged for a room, which now He directed them to go to, and make all preparations that remained to be made. They should know the house at which the Supper was to be eaten by a sign understood by the owner—viz., the man would be carrying a pitcher of water. This was the master of the house, and he would show them the guest-chamber ready for Him and the disciples. They went their way, and 'found everything as Jesus had said.'

Two important events marked this last meal—viz., the washing of the disciples' feet by the Lord, and the departure

* Dean Farrar, in his 'Life of Christ,' after a discussion of the subject, decides that the Last Supper was eaten on the Thursday evening. He also distinguishes this Last Supper from the actual Paschal meal.

of Judas from the Apostolic circle to put his plans into operation.

Supper had already begun, when a dispute arose among the disciples about precedence. The occasion may have been the position occupied at the table, for John reclined on the Lord's bosom, and Judas appears to have been next to Jesus, on the other side. Whilst this dispute was going on the Lord rose up from the table and girded himself with a towel, took a basin of water, and began to wash, and then dry, the disciples' feet. It was an act of love, yet one mingled with pain, that after so long a time spent in His company their hopes and conceptions were still material and selfish. This washing was always done by the servants (slaves) of the house, and for the Master to take the position of the servant and do so lowly a service must have been a surprise to the disciples and a contradiction to their earthly ideas. But the act was more than this. It taught the disciples, in the language of action, that humility and love and purification through Him are demanded by all who would enter into and remain in communion with the Son of God. 'In the mind of John,' says Gilbert, 'this act was a culminating illustration of the love of Jesus,* and it is doubtless true that Jesus did not think of the law of service as capable of fulfilment except in love.†' It was the fiery and impetuous Peter who, of all the Twelve, at first refused to allow the Lord to wash his feet: 'Dost Thou wash my feet?' The Master's answer was firm, but loving: 'If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me.' It was open rebellion to refuse to allow the Lord to wash his feet; but the human will must render a complete renunciation to the Divine will. Immediately, to show his love towards and desire to have a part with the Lord, Peter cries: 'Not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.' The Master answers, in a figure taken

* John xiii. 1.

† *Ibid.*, 34, 35; xiv. 23.

from Eastern usage: 'He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.' The meaning of the figure is simply, 'He that has bathed need only, on coming in from the road, wash off the soil that may have gathered on his feet.'*

How is it that Judas was washed by Christ, and yet, unlike the other disciples, the Lord says of him that the washing had not made him clean? The answer is found in the true nature of the act. This act was not a Pharisaic ordinance supposed to possess a virtue in itself, but was a type of that cleansing without which no man can enter into Christ's kingdom. It was not the purifying itself, but a type of it. This done, the Lord reclined again at table.

Already our Lord had intimated to His disciples that He knew who should betray Him, and now, the washing being over, He goes on to rouse the conscience of Judas still more, and, by more frequent and clearer allusions to his treachery, to prepare the disciples,† that they may not be taken un-awares. As the moments passed, the heinousness of the awful deed moved our Lord more deeply, till at last He could not but speak more plainly: 'Verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me.' The disciples looked at one another with perplexity, wondering who the guilty person could be. Peter, as usual, gave expression to the wish—not directly, but by beckoning to John, who was lying against Jesus' bosom, to ask who it was. In answer to this question our Lord says: 'He who has dipped his hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me.' There were probably several dishes on the table, but since Judas happened to recline near to the Lord, he must have been eating out of the same dish with Him. If Judas was the only one who dipped in the same dish as the Lord, as was probably the case, the allusion could only point to Judas. Whatever were the

* *Vide* Neander, p. 428.

† John xiii. 19.

exact facts, the disciples understood that He spake of Judas Iscariot.

Then the Lord added the terribly solemn words: 'The Son of man goeth as it is written of Him, but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born.' The position of Judas was now both uncomfortable and untenable, and he was anxious to leave such company. The Master noticed his embarrassment, and whispered to him: 'That thou doest, do quickly.' 'Then,' add the Evangelists, 'Satan entered into him,' and he rose up and left the room.

It has been asked, 'How could Satan enter into Judas at this time, seeing that his treachery was already complete, when he had come to terms with the enemies of our Lord?' But was it not yet possible, even after the promise had been given, to disappoint the enemies of our Lord, and to leave and break the promise? When he gave the promise we might say that Satan had suggested it to him. Now Satan takes full possession of him, and claims him as his own.

THE LORD'S SUPPER (Matt. xxvi. 26-29; Mark xiv. 22-25; Luke xxii. 19, 20; 1 Cor. xi. 23-25).

Judas being gone, our Lord begins to institute the Lord's Supper.

We have four accounts of the institution of the Supper—viz., Matt. xxvi. 26-29; Mark xiv. 22-25; Luke xxii. 15-20; and 1 Cor. xi. 23-26. It will be noticed, and calls for an explanation, that John says nothing about the Lord's Supper. Gilbert says the fundamental truth which the Supper teaches is found oftener in John's Gospel than in either of the others.* This is true. But is it conceivable that John should have passed over so important an event in our Lord's life as the institution of the Lord's Supper? Gfrörer sought

* *E.g.*, John vi.

to prove from this omission that, although our Lord may have spoken at the Last Supper the words ascribed to Him, they were words spoken by the way, and not intended to establish such a commemorative rite as that which was afterwards founded upon them; and therefore John omitted them, as he did so many other things comparatively unimportant.* As Neander observes, this hypothesis contradicts itself, for Gfrörer presupposes that John knew and partook of the Lord's Supper before writing his Gospel. It must also be presupposed that it was at that time connected with these words of our Lord, and that John must—since he was not accustomed to attribute a less meaning than others to our Lord's words—have conceived the words to be so connected. 'In a word, no one having a belief in our Lord's claims, and apprehending His solemn state of mind at that Last Supper, can believe that He uttered His solemn words without a deeper and more earnest meaning.' John is guided in his selection and treatment of materials by his desire to express as briefly as possible the 'parallel development of faith and unbelief through the historical presence of Christ.' He takes a few facts out of the great number at his disposal, which, in his judgment, are best suited to make clear his particular points. Knowing, then, his plan, and also his acquaintance with our Lord, we seem precluded from supposing that our Lord did not institute such a Supper, and we are compelled to acknowledge the opposite to be true.

From the silence of John, Strauss concludes that our Lord may not actually have instituted the Lord's Supper as a special rite, but the rite probably arose casually from a tradition which traced its origin to Jesus Christ. On the contrary, we have ample and early evidence to show that the Lord's Supper was soon regarded as a commemorative feast, commemorative of the redemption effected by the

* *Vide* Neander, p. 431.

death of our Lord. The periods of time belonging to the institution of the Lord's Supper we may arrange as follows : Towards the close of the Passover the Lord apparently took one of the cakes which remained over, and placed it before Him ; then He filled the cup with wine, blessed it, and sent it round, telling them that He should no more drink of the fruit of the wine till He should partake of a nobler wine in His Father's kingdom. The act, to them, told of His departure ; but by what means perhaps they could not yet understand. Then He broke the loaf before Him, probably into two halves, in order to symbolize His own body, which should be given for them, and then in smaller portions, one of which He gave to each of the disciples to eat. The quasi-Paschal meal over, He sends round the cup again, this time telling them that the wine represented His own blood, about to be shed for them and for many, for the remission of sins. Each of these acts, therefore, has its signification separately—viz., the fellowship and unity that exists between the Lord and His own, and fellowship and unity that exists in Him between one another. We may see in them another meaning, one mentioned by the Lord Himself—viz., a commemoration of His death and passion. How grand was that faith which, by instituting this rite, told to the world His belief that the Society founded by himself would not only continue to exist, but would be held together by the blessings resulting from His death on the cross !

Our Lord's words, 'This *is* My body' and 'This *is* My blood,' have been taken to refer to a change of substance, be it in what is termed transubstantiation, or consubstantiation. This is not the place to enter into a discussion of this subject, but we might say that, seeing that the body of Christ was still unbroken when He uttered these words, and that as yet His blood had not been shed, none of the disciples could have supposed what, on the occasion of the

first celebration of the Supper was accordingly a plain impossibility—viz., that they were in reality eating and drinking the very body and blood of the Lord. The language was not entirely new to the disciples; it had been substantially used in the conversation between our Lord and the Jews in the synagogue of Capernaum. To 'eat His flesh and drink His blood' were an understood sign of the 'closest spiritual communication with His Divine human nature.' In His general argument against the Gnostics, Irenæus emphasizes the permanent reality of the natural elements in the Lord's Supper thus: 'The bread which is of the earth, receiving the invocation of God, is no longer common bread, but eucharist made up of two things, an earthly and a heavenly.' We may take this candid statement as showing the opinion of the Fathers upon this subject. We are told by both Matthew and Mark that before leaving the supper-chamber Christ and the disciples sang a hymn. This hymn has been thought to be the Hallel, which was always sung at the Passover. But this is unlikely, because the Hallel must have been finished before the Lord's Supper began. The hymn most probably was Psalm xxiii., 'The Lord is my Shepherd,' which, according to a view presented in the Babylonian Gemara, was wont to be sung after the Hallel, and its expressions could be very appropriately used on such an occasion as this.

GETHSEMANE (Matt. xxvi. 36-46; Mark xiv. 32-42;
Luke xxii. 40-46).

After having taken leave of His disciples in a series of short discourses and in prayer to God, our Lord went forth with His disciples across the brook Cedron, on the side of Mount Olivet, to the garden of Gethsemane. It was not the first time He had been there with His disciples; for we know from John's Gospel 'Jesus oftentimes resorted thither.' Judas

Iscariot knew the place, and if he failed to find the Lord in the city he would feel certain of finding Him in Gethsemane. When the Lord reached the garden He directed the disciples—save Peter and the two sons of Zebedee—to sit down, whilst He, with the favoured three, went into the midst of the garden. Then followed a time of depression and agitation, and He became very ‘distressed’ and ‘full of sorrow.’ This was the beginning of His passion, yet He would appear to face it with ‘a cowardly fear of bodily pain.’ But this is not so. The agony is not ascribed in the narrative to physical weakness, nor to anxiety about any unknown evil, nor is this agony to be regarded as of a vicarious character. This agony in Gethsemane was actually part of His sufferings for the redemption of the world. In the wilderness, face to face with the Tempter, our Lord had been offered the victory over the ‘Lord of this world,’ if He would only fall down and worship him. All the sufferings and pain connected with God’s plan of redeeming mankind would thus be done away with, and the victory could be attained at so small cost. Here in Gethsemane is a temptation more intense, perhaps, but of the same kind. As He felt these sufferings begin the choice was presented to His mind to submit to or to resist them, and hence ‘the sufferings brought conflict also.’* Thus the sorrow was not a cowardly fear of bodily pain, but the concrete experience of the force of ‘the sin of the world.’ As Bruce has said, ‘In the greatest inward suffering that *we* can know—viz., remorse, which is also sorrow on account of sin—there is always mingled at least a minimum of satisfaction in sin. But the sorrow of Jesus on account of sin was unmitigated pain.’

In His prayer we see proof of this conflict, for in it is a wish, and therefore a momentary hope, of deliverance from the threatening sufferings—not by means of flight from them,

* Ebrard, p. 418.

but 'by the agency of God, who, satisfied with this submission, might interfere to rescue His Messiah.'* Such hope was only for a moment, for it vanished before His insight, and He submitted unconditionally to God's will.

It is to be noted that John in his narrative makes no mention of our Lord's agony in Gethsemane, an omission demanding explanation, for he was one of the chosen eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses of that remarkable event. It is not sufficient to suppose that, since the other Evangelists had fully recorded it, John considered it unnecessary to do the same. A supposition of this sort is opposed by the purpose of John's Gospel. We must rather regard the omission in the light of John's 'greater freedom, which characterizes the composition of his Gospel, and, therefore, in the peculiarities of style and form, which are due to John's work being an independent reproduction of our Lord's life.'

According to Luke, our Lord's prayers are accompanied by an agony which increased even to a bloody sweat. Hase has no hesitation in dismissing this with the brief statement, 'This is a figurative expression changed into a legend.' Olshausen, Grotius, and Paulus, along with others, refer Luke's words merely to the size and consistence of the drops of sweat. Meyer replies to such criticism: 'Thus in a naturalistic direction the point of comparison found in *αἷματος* is robbed of its characteristic importance, and Luke would have concluded his description, rising to a climax, with nothing but this: and Jesus fell into the most violent sweat! No! *αἷματος* only receives its due in being referred to the *nature* of the sweat, and this nature is viewed as foreshadowing the coming bloodshedding. Hence also the strongly descriptive word *θρόμβοι* is chosen; for *θρόμβος* is not simply a *drop*, but a *clot* of coagulated fluid (milk and the like), and is often used especially of coagulated blood.

* *Vide* Hase's 'Life of Jesus,' p. 210.

Consequently, that sweat of Jesus was indeed no mass of blood, but a *profusion of bloody sweat*, which was mingled with portions of blood trickling down to the ground.* Strauss objects here that such a sweat is an extreme rarity, and is a symptom of certain diseases. This is true of the instances recorded by Aristotle, Theophrast, and Bartholinus :† but Maldonatus, on the other hand, in his commentary on Matthew, tells us that he saw in Paris an instance of it in the case of a perfectly healthy man. Wedelius, too, cites instances in which an analogous state of things—viz., tears of blood—have been produced by persons in great agony of mind. ‘At any rate,’ says Ebrard, ‘we might ask whether the circumstances in which Jesus was placed at the time are not to be reckoned among the “great rarities”; whether this, the most severe agony of body and soul through which any son of man was ever called to pass, was not such as to prevent any man from saying that it could not have occurred.’

When the Lord returned to the disciples, He found them sleeping; ‘for their eyes were heavy.’ Three times He came, to find the same state of things. On the last occasion He no longer looked for sympathy and companionship, nor did He bid them watch and pray, as on the first and second occasions. The time of warning was now past; the crisis had come. ‘Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough; the hour is come.’

But is this the language of irony? In an hour like this is there room in our Lord’s heart for anything but the deepest sympathy and compassion for the weakness of His disciples? Bengel says: ‘It is not irony, but metonymy.’ Chrysostom thinks: ‘It is not the voice of command, or of counsel, but that of reproach.’ Winer, taking into considera-

* *Vide Meyer’s ‘Com. on Luke,’ vol. ii.*

† Referred to by Ebrard.

tion the period of our Lord's life in which the words were uttered, maintains that the assumption of irony is contradictory to the whole tone of our Lord's mind at such a juncture. What is certain is that it is a 'rebuking word,' the meaning of which can best be arrived at by taking it as a question—'Do ye thus sleep through the time and take your rest?' meaning, 'Are ye, then, thus full of sleep throughout to the end?' It is His sorrow and His gentleness which dictate the ironical form, and only in this latter is the reproofing element, which cannot be evaded.*

The traitor is now at hand to break the calm of their repose. Contrast his eagerness and zeal with their attitude and circumstances, and we see the height of our Lord's lofty irony: 'Arise,' says He, 'he is at hand that doth betray Me.' 'Whilst He yet spake cometh Judas, one of the Twelve, and with him a multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and scribes and the elders.' It was a great crowd, for, besides a company from the priests, there was a Roman cohort, which, if full, numbered between 300 and 600 men. We note, too, the fact that, though the moon was full, he takes the precaution of furnishing the crowd with lanterns and torches; for he knew that down in that deep Cedron gully it was often dark when light above.

John's narrative is said to differ from the narrative of the first three Evangelists in the description of the people who composed the crowd. John mentions a Roman cohort along with the servants of the high-priests and Pharisees, whereas the first three Evangelists mention only a great multitude from the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. But John's cohort was understood almost as a matter of course, partly because the whole procedure was preparatory to a formal judicial charge, partly because the Sanhedrin felt such great dread of a popular commotion,

* *Vide* Stier's 'The Words of the Lord Jesus,' vol. vii., p. 260.

which might easily have arisen while they were leading the Lord into the city.*

We are again confronted by an apparent contradiction in the Lord's attitude towards the crowd, as recorded for us by John, and that recorded by the first three Evangelists. How did our Lord make Himself known to the officers? Did He confess publicly that He was the Person whom they sought; or was He pointed out to them by the kiss of Judas? The reply to this question given by Lücke, Hase, and Olshausen seems sufficient, and is the one generally adopted. They say the kiss of Judas occurred first of all; then the Lord met the officers, in order to make Himself known to them.† But if the kiss of Judas had pointed out the Lord to the crowd, what need was there to make Himself known personally to them, since He was already made known? It was an act of courage—the meeting of an unavoidable danger with that manly bravery which appears in His whole demeanour. He had power to protect Himself if He thought fit to use it—a power Judas overlooked, although he could not well have been unacquainted with it—but to the crowd and His disciples He showed that He laid down His life, not of constraint, but of His own accord.

The plot of Judas was well arranged and well carried out. The kiss would cause the least disturbance and arouse no suspicion, and was probably chosen as a sign to betray the Lord for these reasons. It would, moreover, afford the least opportunity for escape, because it would be taken by our Lord—so thought Judas—as a sign of friendship and goodwill. Until the kiss had been given the soldiers were kept at a distance, and remained concealed from the gaze of the Lord and the disciples; but when the kiss had been

* Ebrard's 'Gospel History,' p. 419.

† *Vide* Lange's 'Life of Jesus Christ,' vol. iii., p. 231.

given, and the Lord and Judas had conversed together, the soldiers came forward, ready to arrest Him. It is to John we owe the description of the terror which seized upon the whole band as they endeavoured to meet Jesus. When they were confronted by His question, 'Whom seek ye?' they went back and fell to the earth. Such conduct is thought incredible by the sceptic, but an acquaintance with the circumstances shows that all is intrinsically credible. Everything conspired to overawe these superstitious men. The time was night, when men are especially susceptible to fear. Our Lord's character was no ordinary one, and they knew He was possessed of miraculous powers. Then, when He came forward and told them that He was the Person they sought, His lack of fear and personal character may well have struck terror into their hearts. Twice was this question asked; followed by the same result.

When they had sufficiently recovered themselves and saw that no resistance was offered, the soldiers and servants of the high-priests came near. Peter began to feel that the time had now come to protect themselves, and, drawing his sword, delivered a blow at the head of Malchus, a servant of the high-priest. The blow was a feeble and abortive one, enough to exasperate but not to disable; and Malchus was without his right ear. Had open resistance been intended here was a breach of discipline, but since the Lord was a stranger to violence and blood the act of Peter was doubly grievous; it threatened to inflame the angry passion of His captors, and openly displayed Peter's ignorance of the true nature of Christ's kingdom. The Lord bade Peter to replace his sword in the sheath, reminding him in substance of the Old Testament commandment, 'He that sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.' Then He touched the place, and the remains of the ear that had been cut off, and healed it—but He did not replace the ear.

At the moment of surrender His disciples forsook Him and fled. Two of them—Peter and John—did not flee far, but, after a time, followed as far as the house of Annas. Another young man—probably Mark—springing hastily from his bed, and wrapped only in a linen cloth, appears also to have followed the band who were leading Jesus away. But he, when seized by the soldiers, left his covering in their hands and fled away naked.

OUR LORD BEFORE ANNAS (John xviii. 13-15).

The armed men that were sent were charged to bring the captive Jesus before the high-priest. The officiating high-priest was Caiaphas: why bring Christ, then, before Annas? Annas was an ex-high-priest, but had been removed, according to Josephus, by the Roman authority. He was a man of great influence and wealth,* and was father-in-law of Caiaphas. The examination before Annas was not of a judicial nature, but the explanation of the purpose of this examination probably lies in the fact that the Sanhedrin had not yet assembled; for it was not yet daylight. Till then Annas no doubt took pleasure in conversation with Jesus, hoping for some expressions which he might afterwards use against Him in the trial before Pilate. The event was not important and had no significance. There was no formal accusation, no witnesses, and no verdict given, and no surprise can be occasioned when we learn that the first three Gospels contain no allusion to it. It was a mere preliminary to the trial.

It is to be observed that Annas is called high-priest by John. This title appears to have been retained by anyone who had once held that office, and was even given to members of the families of the high-priests who had not held that office.†

* *Vide* Josephus, 'Antiquities,' xviii. and xx.

† Schürer, quoted by Gilbert.

OUR LORD BEFORE CAIAPHAS (Matt. xxvi. 57-66, xxvii. 1-2 ; Mark xiv. 53-64, xv. 1 ; Luke xxii. 54-71, xxiii. 1 ; John xviii. 19-24).

The judicial trials of our Lord were of two kinds—ecclesiastical and civil. The reason of this was that Judæa was under the rule of Rome, forming a portion of the Roman province of Syria, and administered by a Roman official, who resided in Cæsarea. It was the Roman policy to flatter her dependencies by leaving in their hands as much home rule as was compatible with the retention of her paramount authority. She was especially tolerant in matters of religion. Thus the ancient ecclesiastical tribunal, the Sanhedrin, was still allowed to try all religious questions, and pass sentence upon the offenders. If the sentence chanced to be a capital one the case had to be retried by the Governor, and the carrying out of the sentence, if confirmed by him, devolved upon him. But not only were there two judicial trials, there were also stages, or acts, in each, which we must briefly deal with, in order.

After the preliminary examination by Annas, Jesus, according to John's narrative, was taken before Caiaphas. It cannot be styled a 'judicial trial,' but, like that before Annas, was a brief preliminary examination, which served the purpose of satisfying the revengeful curiosity of Caiaphas.

The proceedings seem to have taken the form of a dialogue, cut short by the abuse of one of the high-priest's officers. Caiaphas asked Jesus 'of His teaching and His disciples.' The insinuation was that He was using some secret and surreptitious means for making disciples, and was teaching them some dangerous doctrine. Christ felt the insinuation keenly, and with His characteristic lofty self-consciousness answered : 'Why askest thou Me? Ask them that heard Me, what I have said unto them ; behold, they know what I said.'

Such straightforward speaking was unknown before the high-priest, and one of the officers clenched his fist and struck the Lord on the mouth, asking, 'Answerest Thou the high-priest so?'

It has been supposed that this act of one of the high-priest's officers is one of the many various insults which Jesus received in the outer hall by the servants. Such identification is impossible, if we take into consideration the time and the place of the several acts. The officer of the high-priest struck our Lord on the mouth during the preliminary examination by Caiaphas ; the series of wanton insults and cruelty of the servants took place after the trial by the Sanhedrin, whilst the Lord awaited the verdict of the court. Again, the one blow was given in the high-priest's palace,* whilst the series of acts were inflicted in the outer courts.

It is not improbable that the interview between our Lord and Caiaphas was brought to a close by the announcement that the Sanhedrin was now gathered, and all was ready for the trial. Messengers had been sent to gather the members together at once, for it was urgent that the trial should be over before daybreak, and Jesus already in the hands of the Romans, before the multitude had gained any knowledge of what was going on.

The letter of the law did not allow this court to meet at night, from fear of secret conspiracies and the hatching of plots against the Roman Empire. Besides, the regular place of meeting for the Sanhedrin was in the hall Gazith, connected with the Temple.† Both rules the court disregarded. The time of the trial was probably about one or two in the morning, and the place, the palace of Caiaphas : so anxious were they to bring about the downfall of Jesus !

* Ellicott speaks of 'a common official residence,' and Godet of 'the sacerdotal palace.'

† *Vide* Lightfoot's 'Prospects of the Temple,' chap. xxii.

If the court in these important points disregarded its own rules, what may we expect of the legality of the issue of the trial? In the words of Jost, the Jewish historian, it was 'a private murder, committed by cunning enemies, not the sentence of a regularly-constituted Sanhedrin.'*

The trial began by the calling of witnesses. It was very difficult to find any offence against Him which the Roman Governor would consider of such gravity as demanded the utmost penalty of the law. Evidence had to be extemporized, and any witness was welcome who would speak damagingly of Him. At length two testified of something they had heard Him speak at the first Passover: 'Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' But what could be made out of this? It was merely a threat or a boast, and if it deserved punishment, certainly it did not merit death; and even in this the witnesses did not agree.

It was only too plain to the high-priest that this accusation was not serious enough, and, addressing our Lord, he said: 'Answerest Thou nothing?' His purpose, undoubtedly, was to try and get some expression from our Lord's lips about His Messianic claims. This promised a more fruitful field in which to find sufficient proof against Him; but He answered him not a word. He did not need to speak, for silence was more eloquent than words, and must have brought home to His judge, and the whole Sanhedrin, the shameful and hollowness of this mock trial.

We see this uneasiness in the judge's next step: his words are full of the agitation of an uneasy man. Putting our Lord under oath, he asks: 'I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God?' This was one of the most momentous times in our Lord's earthly life. All knew that He claimed to be the Messiah; but, except in His dealing with the Samaritan woman, never

* Quoted by Edersheim, vol. ii., p. 553.

before did He openly avow Himself to be the Christ. Now, that title is the signal for condemnation, if He should claim it. He knew the purpose of the question ; He knew what an affirmative answer would mean to Him, but solemnly and explicitly He answers : ' I am. Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.'

How was it that He who had silenced those by whom the title of Messiah had been thrust upon Him, and now knows the consequences of a declaration of His claims, here before the Sanhedrin, confesses that He is the Messiah ? The reason on the present occasion for this explicit claim was peculiar to the occasion. The outcome of this trial would, in all probability, be His death, and He desired that the leaders should act with the fullest possible knowledge of what they were doing.

The high-priest had achieved his end at last. To him such language was blasphemy ; and when he heard it he rent his clothes. There is need of no more evidence ; for ' Behold, now ye have heard His blasphemy.' They all assented that He was guilty and worthy of death.

Thus ended the first of Christ's so-called trials. But how great a fiasco ! No formal accusation was presented ; no accuser appeared ; no witnesses were called for the defence ; the witnesses for the prosecution were found untrustworthy ; our Lord's death was predetermined, and His sentence a foregone conclusion, while the whole proceedings consisted of a series of attempts to force Him into some statement which would supply a colourable pretext for condemning Him. To this long list Andrews adds : ' To show the bias and prejudice of the court, the sentence was immediately carried into execution, the usual delay of twenty-four hours not being granted.'*

* Andrews' ' Life of our Lord,' p. 512.

OUR LORD BEFORE PILATE (Matt. xxvii. 11-14 ; Mark xv. 2-5 ; Luke xxiii. 2-5 ; John xviii. 28-38).

It is not easily determined whether the civil trial took place in the fortress Antonia, or in a palace near to it. It is most probable that—without going fully into the discussion—the movable pavement before Herod's palace on Mount Sion was the scene of the judicial proceedings before Pilate.*

Pilate at this time was the representative of Imperial Rome in Palestine, and before him the Sanhedrists led our Lord, to have confirmed the sentence they had passed upon Him. Between Pilate and the Jews there was little sympathy. He hated their fanaticism and intractableness, and frequently in their quarrels with him he had freely shed their blood. They, on the other hand, accused him of robbery, expediency, and maladministration of every description, and were constantly discovering in his conduct insults directed against their dignity or religion.

Before such a judge, and in the open air—because the Jews would not enter a pagan palace, which to them was unclean—took place this act of 'national suicide': the Jewish nation leading its King to deliver Him to a Gentile governor, to be put to death!

When Pilate was informed that the members of the Sanhedrin had brought a criminal before him, at once he demanded the accusation against the Accused. Plainly it was their purpose to obtain a confirmation of their sentence without stating the grounds of His condemnation ; but Pilate was not in a yielding mood. 'What accusation bring ye against this Man ? Perhaps Pilate already knew of our Lord, or the question may have been asked from a sense of justice. Pilate's question cut to the quick the priests and elders, and they answered, almost contemptuously, but in their charac-

* *Vide* Keim's eloquent account of the building, vol. vi., p. 80.

teristic way, 'If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up unto thee.' It was a broad hint that he should rely upon their examination, and content himself with ratifying their sentence.

The artfulness of the answer annoyed Pilate, and he answered tartly: 'Take ye Him and judge Him according to your law.' Another unkind retort to them—most humiliating! They have to confess, 'It is not lawful for us to put any man to death.'

Forced against their will to formulate a charge, they at length present three: Firstly, He was perverting the nation; secondly, He forbade to give tribute to Cæsar; and, thirdly, He set Himself up as a King. The first two we can set aside as deliberate falsehoods.* The third requires a little examination; for it was a political accusation.

Having heard the accusations, Pilate takes Jesus into the palace to examine Him privately. 'Art thou the King of the Jews?' he asks. It was a straightforward question, but it could not receive a direct reply, because it was capable of receiving both an express affirmative or negative, according to the sense in which the question was asked. Was Pilate asking this as a Roman or as a Jew? Therefore, the Lord asks him, 'Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me?' It was a pertinent question, but it offended Pilate. 'Am I a Jew?' he asks angrily. Our Lord then declared fully His claims and the nature of His kingdom. 'My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is My kingdom not from hence.' Such words denied that our Lord was a King in the worldly sense; He was no rival of the Roman Emperor. This was His kingdom—as He defines more exactly: 'I was born to this end, that I should bear witness unto the truth'—the realm of truth.

* Keim calls the second accusation 'a very flagrant lie.'

To Pilate a kingdom of truth was like a philosophical expression to a fool—something without reality or meaning. ‘What is truth?’ he asked; but, without waiting for an answer, he walks quickly out on to the pavement and pronounces his acquittal—‘I find in Him no fault at all.’

Pilate now viewed our Lord simply as a religious enthusiast. He saw it was ‘from envy they had delivered Him up,’ and could find no political crimes in Him at all. This enraged the bloodthirsty crowd, and they poured out still more accusations against Him. ‘He stirred up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place,’ they cried. Galilee was noted as a hotbed of insurrection, and the charge was probably made to excite prejudice against the Lord. As soon as Galilee was mentioned, a way out of the difficulty seemed to present itself to Pilate. Herod Antipas was Tetrarch of Galilee, and he had just come to Jerusalem for the feast. Why not send this Jesus to Herod?

OUR LORD BEFORE HEROD (Luke xxiii. 6-12).

The character of Herod Antipas has been likened to ‘a mass of pulp,’ capable of receiving every impression, but able to retain none. His past life had been one of debauchery and intrigue; but after the ignominious defeat inflicted upon him by his father-in-law, King Aretas, his mind was haunted by the spectres of remorse and fear. He craved now for pleasures new and exciting, something always at hand to occupy his thoughts and make him forget the past. He had long wished to see Jesus, for he had heard much of Him, and he wished to see what He could do. Perhaps He would work a miracle before him. At all events, it would supply him with some new amusement. But it was no part of the Lord’s calling to work miracles to satisfy an idle curiosity. Not even on His own behalf did He ever work a miracle. Miracles were always for the good of others.

But why did not our Lord, if not work a miracle, answer the questions Herod put to Him? Herod's soul needed Divine illumination just as other men's souls do. Perhaps a miracle would have convinced him of our Lord's divinity and led him to believe in Him. Did not Christ here lose a valuable opportunity? To such questioning we must answer that our Lord's silence was an appeal to Herod's soul. Was not silence on this occasion more eloquent than speech? The conscience of Herod was seared as with a red-hot iron, for he could let our Lord stand there before him, with that Divine dignity which He never lost, and yet feel no remorse nor shame nor guilt of sin. Our Lord's words before such a man would have been as pearls before swine.

We have further proof of this in the way in which he dismisses our Lord. He felt sure the Lord could not work a miracle, or otherwise he would gladly have done so before him. No doubt this Christ was an impostor, he thought, without Messianic claims or even the powers of a magician. Our Lord had laid claim to be a King, so, in mockery, Herod arrayed Him in a gorgeous purple robe and sent Him back to the Procurator.

CHRIST AGAIN BEFORE PILATE (Matt. xxvii. 15-30; Mark xv. 6-19; Luke xxiii. 13-25; John xviii. 38-40, xix. 1-16).

After Jesus had been brought back to Pilate, the latter called the Sanhedrists together and informed them that neither he nor Herod found any fault in Jesus; but, as a sop to their anger, he adds, 'I will therefore chastise Him and release Him.' How unjust! How base such a conclusion!

It was a cruel operation, and not unfrequently the victim died in the midst of it. The inability of our Lord to bear His own cross to the place of execution has been thought to be due to the exhaustion produced by this punishment.

It is not unlikely that Pilate had another purpose in ordering our Lord to be tortured. If the people saw His lacerated body, with the cruel weals and wounds, they might think He had suffered sufficiently, and be moved to pity. 'Behold the Man,' said Pilate, as he again brought Jesus before the people. It was as much as to say, 'Can it be believed that He would wish to make Himself your King? He is only an enthusiast: you should pity Him, and recognise the unreasonableness of proceeding further.' The only response to this appeal is, 'Crucify Him!' We pass over the remaining conversation between our Lord and Pilate—for we have already devoted too much space to this trial—to notice the passing of the sentence by Pilate upon Jesus.

The Jews had one more weapon to make Pilate grant their demand: they alarmed him with a threat—so terrible at that time—to complain against him to the Emperor. 'If thou let this Man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend!' Nothing could have frightened Pilate more; he knew so well that his administration could not bear the light of an investigation such as might follow a complaint from his subjects. It was too much for him, and at last he reluctantly yielded to their threat, and delivered Jesus to be crucified.

Matthew's narrative adds Pilate's act of washing his hands, to attest his innocence of the condemnation of our Lord. It has been urged against Matthew's statement that this was a Jewish custom, based on Deut. xxi. 6, 7, peculiar to the Jews, and not met with anywhere besides. If Pilate performed such an act, then he adopted a Jewish custom, which, say the critics, is exceedingly improbable. That Pilate should so honour the Jews as to resort to a Jewish custom is certainly improbable. But what is the authority for asserting that the custom was exclusively Jewish? It was certainly common among the Romans, as we learn from Cicero, Livy, and Ovid. In front of their temples stood *labra* in which they washed their

hands on entering, as a symbol of purification.* Nor was the custom confined to Jews and Romans; for Wolf proved that the symbol of washing, particularly the hands, was common throughout antiquity.

THE CRUCIFIXION (Matt. xvii. 31-34, xvii. 35-66; Mark xv. 20-47; Luke xxiii. 26-56; John xix. 16-42).

At last the mock trials are over, the procession of death is formed, and our Lord is on His way to Golgotha. A wooden cross has been hurriedly nailed together, and this is given to our Lord to carry. The exact course of affairs is not very clear in the Gospels; for John represents Jesus as carrying it alone, whereas Matthew and Mark assert that it was carried by one whom they met. The language of Matthew most certainly implies that at first the cross was carried by Jesus Himself. The same is true of Mark's narrative. We may conclude, then, that there is no contradiction here; but that John mentions the first part of the journey, when our Lord carried His own cross; the other Evangelists mentioning only the latter part of that journey, when Simon assisted Him.

The act of nailing the Lord to the cross was performed by the Roman soldiers, and, to add still greater ignominy to His position, two robbers were crucified with Him—one on the right hand, the other on the left.

Over His head the paper was nailed, telling the name of the Crucified and indicating the crime. We must pass over much connected with this darkest hour of the world's history—*e.g.*, the scorn and mockery which burst forth unrestrained from the chief priests and elders; the indignities meted out to the Lord by the soldiery and the other lookers-on; the words uttered by Him in his last hours—to go on to notice briefly the remarkable phenomena which accompanied His death.

* *Vide* Ebrard's 'Gospel History' for a full treatment of this subject, pp. 431, 432.

THE PORTENTS (Matt. xxvii. 45, 51-53 ; Mark xv. 33, 38 ; Luke xxiii. 44, 45).

The first of these was darkness, which spread over the sky from noon till 3 p.m., the very time when the blazing Oriental sun usually shone out in all its splendour. How are we to account for this ? Was it an eclipse of the sun ? No ; it was the time of full moon, when an eclipse was impossible. Perhaps it was the darkness which precedes the earthquake. This suggestion cannot be accepted ; for Mark and Luke mention the darkness, but omit the earthquake, which they would not have done if one was in close relationship with the other. Nor was it the darkness caused by clouds which happened to obscure the sun at that time. All explanations fail, for it was darkness unusual and supernatural. Science has endeavoured to explain it, but cannot do so. It was a gloom, as if the earth were bewailing the death of the Son of God, its Creator ; or as the voice of God, making itself heard through Nature.

The next portent is the rending of the veil, which screened the Holy of Holies from the holy place in the Temple. The time was the hour of evening sacrifice, when the priests would probably be present in the Temple.

In the Gospel according to the Hebrews mention is made of the rending of the Temple veil by the breaking of the lintel of the Temple, which fell on the veil. Jerome thinks this explains the present case. But the Gospel according to the Hebrews is too corrupt to substantiate or explain any New Testament incident.

The explanation frequently given is that the rent was due to the earthquake, which shook the building. But the earthquake followed after the rending of the veil. Again, some think the veil was struck by lightning ; but this is pure guesswork, and profits us nothing. What is certain is that

here was a Divine sign accompanying the moment of our Lord's decease, for the purpose of indicating that by His death the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile was broken down, and that the Old Dispensation was done away with, and all men now have free access into the very presence of God the Father.

The earthquake, found only in Matthew's narrative, is the next portent. Such an earthquake might well be expected, and was as nothing in comparison with that greatest of all wonders which had just taken place. It attested the overwhelming power of that moral and religious earthquake which the death of our Lord should cause. Old beliefs would be shattered, old superstitions rent, and in men's hearts everywhere there should be a severing of the old lines of thought.

The fourth portent is the opening of the graves. This would probably be the outcome of the earthquake, for the graves were hewn in the rocks. Many and great difficulties beset the view that this incident is an historical fact, but we can without hesitation regard the incident, without denying its historical character, as Divine symbolism, according to which the death of Christ is to be understood as overcoming the grave and triumphing over the power of death—preparing the day for the resurrection of all believers to the eternal life of the Messianic kingdom.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION

THE very foundation of Christianity is the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ ; according as this is a fact or not, Christianity stands or falls. The Apostle Paul, with his keen logical intellect, his quick perception, and tenacious

grasp of truth, saw this, and staked all on this one fact. 'If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain,' he says, 'and your faith is also vain.' By Jesus Christ's Resurrection from the dead we mean that, on the third day after His death, the grave in which His dead body was laid was left empty, and He rose to life again with His body transfigured into fresh beauty and endowments. It was the same body that had been placed in the grave, but it was transformed and revived, and no longer capable of suffering death or dissolution.

In the Resurrection of our Lord, then, we have the key and centre of the Christian position. The brunt of the battle gathers round it: if it be lost, all is lost; if it be secured, the conflict is over and the victory won.

But not only is the fact of the Resurrection of our Lord momentous to the defenders of Christianity, but it is also important to opponents; for if this miracle cannot be established by sufficient proof, it is idle to discuss the evidence for other miracles. Clearly the evidence for the Resurrection of our Lord must be of the most cogent and unimpeachable character, far more conclusive than would be sufficient to establish an ordinary occurrence. In the words of Samuel Laing,* himself an unbeliever in our Lord's Resurrection, the discoveries of modern science have shown beyond a possibility of doubt that the miracles which former ages fancied they saw around them every day had no real existence, and that, except possibly in the solitary instance of the Christian miracles, there has been no supernatural interference with the laws of Nature throughout the enormous ranges of space, time, and matter. It may be going too far to say with Hume that no amount of evidence can prove a miracle, since it must always remain more probable that human testimony should be false than that the laws of

* 'Modern Science and Modern Thought,' p. 94.

Nature should have been violated. But it is not going too far to say that the evidence to establish such a violation must be altogether overwhelming, and open to no other possible construction.

We will not add to this statement anything more to show how important is the fact of the Resurrection, and of what nature the evidence to establish it must be. We will turn at once to examine the evidence, and, for our present purpose, take it on its own merits, without aid from any preconceived theory that it is sinful to scrutinize it, because the books in which it is contained are inspired.

Of the witnesses in favour of the Resurrection, Paul is perhaps the best, because we know most about him. At the time of the Resurrection he was about thirty years of age, and therefore of mature understanding. He had also a keen interest in the whole business, as a determined opponent of Christianity, and knew well all that the gain-sayers had to say against the stories told. He had opportunities subsequently of hearing the statements of eye-witnesses in his interviews with Peter, James and John, and it is hardly probable that he would accept their evidence without thoroughly sifting it. There is no doubt that he was a historical personage, who lived at the time of our Lord, and in the manner described in the Acts of the Apostles.

Paul's testimony to the truth of the Resurrection of our Lord is contained in his Epistles. Of these, the four most important—viz., that to the Romans, the two to the Corinthians, and that to the Galatians—are only available for our purpose; for they are the only letters which are, with the exception of the Dutch school of critics, universally acknowledged to have been written by Paul himself.

More than this, it is undisputed that the latest of these four Epistles cannot have been written at a later date than thirty years after our Lord's crucifixion. Such men as

Strauss, Renan, and Baur, and all the learned opponents in Europe, admit this.

Bearing this fact in mind, let us now go on and see what evidence these Epistles furnish of Paul's views of the Resurrection. (1) They make it certain that Paul not only believed in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ as a historical fact, but that he also considered it as the source from which the life of the revived Christian Church sprang. His many references to the miracle of the Resurrection are of the most unimpeachable character. One reference will suffice. In the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians he declares that if the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is not a fact, Christianity is a delusion. (2) His mode of reference to the Resurrection proves that he himself not only believed in it as a fact, but that he did not entertain the smallest doubt that those to whom he wrote believed it as firmly as he did. All his references, except those of 1 Cor. xv. and Gal. i. and ii., where he is dealing with the Resurrection for purposes directly historical and controversial, were of this kind. (3) Further, there are circumstances connected with these references which render this testimony stronger than any other in history. Party spirit raged fiercely in two of these Churches. In the Church in Corinth there were several parties who were more or less adverse to Paul. He names three—viz., an Apollos party, another which professed to follow Peter, and a third which claimed to be strict followers of Jesus Christ. Besides these he specifies a fourth party, which was specially attached to himself. One of these parties went so far as to deny Paul's right to the Apostolical office, on the ground that he had not been one of the original companions of the Lord.*

Such being the state of affairs in this Church, it is obvious that if the party in opposition to the Apostle had held

* *Vide* 2 Cor.

different views respecting the reality of the Resurrection from himself, the demolition of his entire defence would have been certain. He puts to them the question ; ' Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord ? ' These words, perhaps, are not sufficient evidence that he had really seen our Lord after His Resurrection, but, in the words of Prebendary Row, we may say. ' If his opponents had been firmly persuaded that the Resurrection was a fact, it would have been an unanswerable reason for affirming that his claim to Apostolical authority, based on his having seen the risen Lord, was worthless, because He had not risen.'* It is evident, therefore, that, as far as the fact of the Resurrection is concerned, Paul and his bitterest opponents in the Church must have been agreed as to its truth. (4) The evidence in favour of the fact of our Lord's Resurrection which is furnished by the Epistle to the Galatians is still stronger. Here was a powerful party who not only denied Paul's Apostleship, but who had so far departed from his teaching that he designates their doctrine by the name of ' a different gospel.' In this Epistle to the Galatian Church we see that, however great were the differences between his opponents and himself, there was no diversity of opinion between them that the belief in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ was the foundation of their common Christianity.† (5) In Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians we find him making a very definite statement as to the number of persons who believed that they had seen Jesus Christ after He had risen from the dead. He tells us ‡ that on one occasion He was seen of five hundred persons at once, of whom more than half were still alive when he wrote the Epistle. Consider how Paul put himself in the hands of his opponents if this fact was

* In a tract on 'The Historical Evidence of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ,' published by the Religious Tract Society.

† Gal. i. 1-9.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 6.

not generally admitted to be true! Some would certainly have repudiated false statements. But if these five hundred persons really believed that they had seen Jesus Christ after His Resurrection, how is it possible to account for the fact otherwise than on the assumption of its truth?*

Summing up the points established by Paul's unimpeachable historical evidence, we find:—

(a) That within thirty years after our Lord's crucifixion the Christian Church, without distinction of party, believed that the ground of its existence was the fact that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead.

(b) That at that period there were more than two hundred and fifty persons alive who believed that they had seen Him alive after His death.

(c) That Paul's most violent opponents held, in common with him, a belief in the Resurrection.

(d) That within a few months after the crucifixion the Church must have been reconstructed on the foundation of the belief that its crucified Messiah had been raised again from the dead. If the time had been longer the Church must have perished in its Founder's grave.†

We turn now to the testimony of the Gospels. That they directly assert the Resurrection as a fact, and describe several appearances of our Lord after it, cannot be doubted. The only way in which their testimony can be invalidated is by the hypothesis that they were not written at an early date, or by the persons whose names they bear—*i.e.*, not by eye-witnesses, or those associated with eye-witnesses, but in the second century by later writers.

No point in history has been, perhaps, more keenly debated, but it is not for us now to give the arguments *pro* and *con* in the controversy. Suffice it to say that

* Row on 'The Historical Evidence of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.'

† *Ibid.*

Drs. Lightfoot, Salmon, Robinson, Harnack, and others, have, after much investigation, shown that the Gospel according to Mark was written about A.D. 65, the Gospel according to Matthew before or about A.D. 75, and the Gospel according to Luke about A.D. 70.* Moreover, we have early and unimpeachable testimony that the first three Gospels are distinctly connected with the previous preaching of the Apostles, and were written to supply a permanent record of that which was before only oral tradition. In history the written Gospels are acknowledged to be the last stage of the Apostolic preaching, the preparation for passing into a new age. The evidence of Papias, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, Eusebius, and Irenæus, puts this beyond all doubt.†

It will have been noticed that we have said nothing about the fourth Gospel. Its date remains unsettled, and therefore we cannot regard it as being of as great value for our present purpose as the other Gospels. 'The earliest Christian teachers exhibit more or less distinctly,' says Westcott, 'the marks of John's teaching.' For example, Ignatius was well acquainted with John's writings, and closely resembled him in natural character. Polycarp, Papias, and, later, Apollinaris, Tatian and Polycrates, quote John's Gospel and Epistles,‡ and therefore give us a date not later than the second century. We cannot say more than this at present.

When we come to consider the testimony of the Gospels to the resurrection, we find that they give substantially the same narrative. But then comes this perplexing circumstance. After passages of almost literal identity, we have statements made which are apparently inconsistent with the statements of the other Evangelists.

* Hastings' 'Bible Dictionary' gives Matt.

† 'The Study of the Gospels,' by Dean Robinson.

‡ *Vide* Westcott's 'Introduction to the Study of the Gospels.'

Thus, Matthew tells us that the disciples were especially commanded 'to go to Galilee; there shall they see Him.' They went, and saw the Lord on a mountain, where He had appointed them to meet Him. Luke, on the other hand, says that 'He commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem,' and describes them as remaining there and witnessing the appearances of our Lord, including the final appearance—the Ascension.

Various conjectures have been made to account for the reason why Matthew mentions only this particular meeting with the disciples, as if it were the only one, whilst Luke seems to ignore it altogether, and appears to say that our Lord showed Himself only in Jerusalem. Professor Milligan* connects this difference with the purpose of the different Evangelists. Each desired, probably, to present the Resurrection of their Lord in a light corresponding to that in which they had previously treated His whole past life. 'Thus it is that Matthew, having been occupied with the Galilean ministry, as that in which he beheld the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecy,† and having throughout the whole of his Gospel set forth Jesus as the Bringer-in of a true righteousness, as the great Lawgiver of the New Testament economy, has these thoughts mainly in his mind when he comes to the Resurrection. The appearances in Galilee assume supreme importance in his eyes, and the idea of the Lawgiver may be traced in those words of the risen Lord which he alone has preserved: 'Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you!' With Luke the same principle holds. He especially set forth the human Saviour and the universality of His mission of forgiveness, and therefore 'seizes upon those things in connection with the

* 'The Resurrection of Our Lord,' p. 60.

† Matt. iv. 12-17.

Resurrection which illustrate the same points. He alone tells us* of the broiled fish eaten by the risen Lord, for the purpose of showing that He was still what He had always been—the human Friend. He alone speaks, not as Matthew, of teaching all the nations, but of repentance and remission of sins to be preached to all;† and he alone tells us of the consolatory blessing with which, lifting up His hands, the Lord blessed His disciples when He ascended to heaven.

This explanation is a probable one, but does not altogether explain the difficulty. Perhaps it will never be fully cleared up. We incline to regard it as one of the few variations such as are always to be expected when independent witnesses give separate accounts of the same story, without any attempt to bring them into verbal harmony. Again quoting Professor Milligan : ‘ Statements directly and positively contradictory as to the main point at issue would undoubtedly justify our rejecting it ; but where the main point is admitted by every witness, slighter differences are not only perfectly consistent with its truth, but are of the greatest importance for establishing it. This is precisely the state of matters with which we have now to deal. It is denied by no one that through all the evidence afforded by our witnesses there runs the one decided conviction that their risen Lord has manifested Himself to them or others. They thoroughly believed that : they wished to give expression to their belief. Unless it can be shown that the differences are such as to lead us to the thought of mythical or legendary exaggeration, we are bound to give them the benefit of the principle of universal application.’‡

A third confirmatory fact of our Lord’s Resurrection is found in the institution of the Lord’s Day, of which there are traces within a week of the Resurrection, and which no

* Luke xxiv. 41-43.

† *Ibid.*, 47.

‡ ‘ The Resurrection of our Lord,’ p. 57.

one will dream of denying was expressly designed to commemorate that event. Here we have one of the strongest proofs of an event having taken place—viz., the existence of the commemorative institution dating back to the very time of its occurrence.

The existence of the Christian Church, which has existed from close upon the time of the crucifixion of our Lord, without a break in its continuity, is a fact which cannot be accounted for otherwise than by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. That institution has stood the strain of many an assault; it has changed the aspect of human society far more than any other single cause, or other causes in combination; it has been a most potent factor in modern civilization, and has been fraught with the most beneficent results to mankind. Yet the one substratum upon which that institution is based ultimately is the alleged fact that Jesus Christ rose again from the dead. It is impossible to account for its origin in any other way. At the crucifixion the hopes of our Lord's followers were crushed; they suddenly revived as the result of a certain alleged occurrence, genuine or fictitious. If fictitious, then it was a fraud or a delusion. Could a society based on a fraud have done so much to promote godliness and truth as the Church confessedly has done? Could a society originating in the imagination of visionary enthusiasts have been so remarkable for solid achievements and practical vigour as the Christian Church has been? To such questions only a negative answer can be given.

But it is admitted, by friend and foe alike, that the Apostles, as they preach at Pentecost, are altogether different men from what they were immediately after the crucifixion. Scherer, a critic who does not believe in the Resurrection, states the case as follows: 'Let one picture, if he can, the state of mind into which the little company of

believers must have been thrown on the evening of the execution of their Master, on the day after the crucifixion. What a blow! What a shipwreck of illusions! They had placed all their hope in the sweet Preacher of Galilee. Jesus had given Himself out as Messiah, and they had naïvely believed in His declarations. They were persuaded that their Master would sooner or later avow His character, and that He would be carried with acclamation to the throne. They see in Him a monarch in disguise, the heir of the magnificent promises of God. A few weeks more, a little patience, and they will assist at the marvels of the latter day. They themselves will participate in the honours. . . . But indeed! No, all that was only a dream! The critical moment has come, and Jesus has succumbed. In place of a throne, He has found a malefactor's death. He is dead. You hear it—dead—He who ought to live for ever. He has perished upon a cross like the meanest of criminals, He who ought to reign in a glory more than human. But it is a small matter that He is dead. His promises have perished with Him. Poor disciples! He has deceived you! Happy, still, if you have lost only the head of the family, the friend, the venerated Master. But you have not even the consolation to follow Him with your admiration; you are compelled to doubt Him, you are condemned to regard Him as a fool—who knows?—as an impostor! Three days pass, days of trouble, of shame, of which nothing will ever give an idea; three days pass, and all is changed! These very men, here still confounded and despairing, doubting Christ, God, themselves—these very men have found once more everything! They believe anew, and more than ever. They triumph. Nothing henceforth can overcome them. And this conviction which they carry within them they know how to communicate. Listen, O world! Thou comest to hear the accent of a

persuasion so indomitable that it will be necessary indeed that thou shouldest end by yielding to it, and by submitting thyself. Such had been the morrow of the crucifixion, and such was the day after. What has happened between these two moments?*

We think it sufficient to reply that the disciples had found the grave empty, and their Master risen from the dead. Nothing is in perfect accord with the admittedly marvellous change in the disciples but the Resurrection of our Lord. As Pressensé expresses it, 'The empty tomb has been the cradle of the Church, and if in this foundation of her faith the Church has been mistaken, she must needs lay herself down by the mortal remains, I say, not of a man, but of a religion.'

We have examined the evidence for the Resurrection; now we must turn to the theories which have been advanced to explain away this miracle—'the key of the Christian position.'

It has been alleged that the Resurrection was a matter of falsehood. This hypothesis finds no supporters now; for men of all schools would be ashamed to identify themselves with so base a suggestion. This is confessed by leaders of sceptical thought—*e.g.*, Baur, 'History must hold us to the assertion that the faith of the disciples in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ was a fact, certain and indisputable'; and Strauss, 'The historian must acknowledge that the disciples firmly believed that Jesus was risen.'

The earliest attempt to deny the Resurrection was that framed by the elders—*viz.*, 'His disciples came by night, and stole Him away while we slept.' It is a theory now not seriously entertained, perhaps, by any, because it bears the lie on its face. For Roman soldiers to make such a confession meant that death awaited them, unless they had

* Scherer, as quoted by Coulin, in his '*Le Fils de l'Homme*,' pp. 170-172.

been previously assured that they were safe against all danger. No mere bribe would have sufficed ; it was a question of life or death, and indicates beyond all doubt that the authorities were parties in the falsehood. But what could the disciples do with the sacred body if they got it into their possession ? It had been laid in an honoured tomb, and none they could know of were more worthy of the honour than Joseph's. If they had removed it, what would have been the value of a dead body to them ? Besides, is it probable that these terror-stricken disciples dared to attempt to break open the tomb ?

The 'theory of visions,' which is the prevalent one amongst sceptics of our day, and which was the one adopted in a popular, but theologically shallow and dangerous, novel a few years ago—'Robert Elsmere'—is stated thus : 'The ashes of Jesus were mingled with the earth of Palestine, and in the days and weeks that followed the devout and passionate fancy of a few mourning Galileans begat the exquisite fable of the Resurrection ;' which is further described as 'a naïve and contradictory story.' This theory presupposes that the appearances of the risen Lord were not *objective*, but purely subjective, and were due to that state of mind out of which visions spring, in which the disciples found themselves after the death of their Master.

The objections to this theory are many and convincing. Against it we urge the depression that had seized upon the minds of the disciples. Such a state of mind was not one in which subjective visions were likely to occur. The Gospels testify to the unexpectant mood in which all the disciples found themselves. They had given up all as lost, and felt that they had no living Messiah.

There is, too, another objection in the number of the appearances. If some few saw visions of the risen Lord, it is not probable that many should have been thus favoured.

Yet we know that our Lord was seen by Mary Magdalene, then by several women, afterwards by Peter, then by two disciples on the way to Emmaus, then by the Apostles in the upper room, then by the eleven Apostles, then by seven gathered at the Sea of Galilee, then by James, and, most convincing of all, by five hundred at once, of whom the greater part were alive in the day when Paul wrote his First Epistle to the Corinthians.* Further, our Lord was seen at all hours of the day—in the early morning, in the broad day, as well as in the evening. His disciples touched Him, they examined His body and wounds, they conversed with Him and ate with Him. How can all this be explained by the theory of visions?

Moreover, Prebendary Row has most ably shown that the claim to have conversed with a risen person in the body has never been made.† He says: 'I doubt whether an authentic instance can be found of any one who has positively affirmed that he has seen and conversed with another after he was dead, not as spirit, but in bodily reality. The old pagans, who accepted supernaturalism enough, would have scoffed at such a belief as lying beyond the bounds of the possible, and would have pronounced anyone mad who had affirmed that he had done so. I am aware that there are a few old pagan stories about men who had been brought back from the other world; but these were usually placed by the priests in the remotest ages of the past. But in the present case history refuses to allow of any sufficient time for the story of the Resurrection to have grown up in this gradual manner under shelter of the remote past.'

Another hypothesis to explain away our Lord's Resurrection is that He did not die at the time He was supposed to

* 1 Cor. xv. 6.

† 'The Historical Evidence of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.'

die, but revived after being taken down from the cross. It may be admitted that, as crucifixion was not immediately fatal, and the loss of blood was small in amount, one might be restored by medical aid after he had been nailed to a cross. For example, Josephus, in his autobiography, tells of an occasion when he was sent, with a troop of Roman horse, to the village of Tekoah to reconnoitre. Returning from the village to Jerusalem, Josephus saw several persons hanging on crosses, who must have been crucified in the interim, as he had not seen them when going out. On arriving at the camp, he begged of Titus the lives of three, and had them at once taken down and treated medically, with the utmost care; yet but one out of the three survived. But does not this incident argue strongly in favour of our contention that our Lord's death was real? These three men had hung on the cross but a few hours, yet, with careful nursing and medical aid, only one of the three survived. Notice, too, the following points in our Lord's case, which put it beyond doubt that He left the world in the struggles of death. He was on the cross from 9 a.m. until 6 p.m.; He had been so worn out by the scourging that He could not carry His cross. The Roman soldiers were so certain that He was dead when they came to see for themselves that they did not break His legs, but, to put it beyond all question, contented themselves by thrusting a spear into His side; and, after all this, the Lord was laid for two nights and a day in a cold grave, carefully guarded by soldiers. What further proof could we ask for?

It has also been suggested in quite modern times that our Lord was merely in a swoon caused by pain and exhaustion when taken down from the cross. This hypothesis is very much like the previous one. If we suppose this hypothesis to be true, how could our Lord evade the notice of the guard that surrounded the tomb, and, with unhealed

wounds, feverish and exhausted, go back to His disciples and revive their spirits and change their sorrow into enthusiasm? Even Strauss says that this would have been impossible.*

We will close this section by a brief notice of the witness which the empty grave affords to the certainty of the Resurrection. 'In the very place in which Christianity was set up, in Jerusalem itself, the place where He was said to have been crucified and buried, within a few days it was publicly announced that He had risen from the dead. It is evident that if our Lord's body could have been found the Jews would have produced it as the shortest and most complete answer possible to the story. But they could not do so. We are told by Matthew that the Jews were warned of the expectation of our Lord's followers, and that they took the extra precaution, in consequence of this notice, to guard the body by a band of soldiers. But with all these precautions, when the Resurrection was announced neither the Jews nor the soldiery could produce the body, and had to find refuge in a lie, which is absolutely inconsistent with the supposition of the Apostles' integrity.'

There is another point which is quite as significant as the last: the attitude of the Jews towards the announcement of our Lord's Resurrection. The Jews hated Christianity even more than they did Jesus Christ, and scrupled at no means that promised its suppression. 'They were then,' says Fairbairn, 'as now, an ubiquitous race, living in all lands, trading in all cities; a separate community, touching the Gentiles everywhere, mingling with them nowhere, yet remaining in their dispersion Jews still, bound to Jerusalem by the subtlest affinities, familiar with her story, with all that concerned her present and her past. They had then, as now, a wonderful faculty for searching out profitable

* 'The New Life of Jesus,' vol. i., p. 412.

secrets, knew how to make their way into the heart of social mysteries, and how to use them for what they esteemed the best.' It was to these people that the Apostles first went, and from them their troubles came. They raised riots, and persecuted the Apostles from city to city. But one thing is certain, so far as we can discover from the oldest literature, they never denied the reality of the Resurrection or even questioned it. This attitude is most significant, especially when we try to weigh the proofs of the Resurrection.*

But is this statement strictly correct? Was it not the Jews who asserted that the disciples stole the body of Jesus Christ? True, Matthew records this story. But even this does not disprove what has been said, without other evidence being forthcoming. Again quoting Fairbairn: 'Our oldest and our most certainly authentic literature, the great Pauline Epistles, show no trace of such stories, nor do they seem even to have so met him as to have demanded either serious or incidental notice. And this is the significant point: late rumours are but myths, expressive of the action of mind, not of the transactions of history.' The ridiculousness of the falsehood published by the elders would be apparent at once, and most likely gained no currency, except among a very few, whom we may regard as being so few that they were scarcely worthy of notice. Hence the truth of the Resurrection stands immovably based upon the testimony, and we may even say upon the very existence, of the Apostolic Church.

OUR LORD APPEARS TO BELIEVERS ONLY.

How was it that our Lord after His Resurrection did not make a public appearance, and show to all in Jerusalem that He had risen again? Would not opponents have

* *Vide* Principal Fairbairn's 'Studies in the Life of Christ,' p. 355.

been turned into friends, and the testimony of the Apostles been accepted without hesitation?

Our Lord's appearances were only designed for those who had believed in and followed Him before His death. This was so for several reasons. In the first place, opponents would not be convinced by a miracle of this sort. If they would not believe in Him when active amongst them as man, neither would they have been persuaded if He had appeared as One risen from the dead.* Another reason is the purposes of these appearances. These purposes were (1) to convince the Apostles that He had risen; (2) to give them instructions and guidance for the future. Such purposes could not directly benefit unbelievers.

OUR LORD'S ASCENSION. (Acts i. 9-11).

The last of our Lord's appearances to His disciples was that which took place on the Mount of Olives, at His Ascension. None of the Gospels contain any allusion to the Ascension, if we omit the words 'and was carried up into heaven,' which are omitted from Luke xxiv. 51 by the leading textual critics, but Luke mentions it in his book of the Acts.† This evidence has been considered scanty and insufficient. 'An event of so great importance would be recorded not only in the Acts, but also in the Gospels,' says the critic. But is this necessarily so? The Ascension of our Lord would rest on firm grounds, even apart from the particular form in which it is represented by Luke; nay, even if there were not a word about it in the volume of Holy Scripture. Our Lord, as the risen One, cannot by any possibility tarry on earth with His disciples. Still less can He leave the earth by death; but when He leaves it,

* In the parable Abraham is represented as speaking to Dives in these same terms (Luke xvi. 31).

† Acts i. 9.

it must be in some way conformable to His new mode of being, and in a way compatible with the glorified life. Hence it follows that the whole Apostolic teaching of our Lord's Resurrection bears the character of the Ascension. The Resurrection accomplished, the Ascension would necessarily follow. Death had done its worst, and could claim Him no more, but when He leaves the earth it must be by some other way.

While the Gospels contain no allusion to the Ascension, we cannot say that the Acts is the only book which mentions it. We find in the Epistles that the Ascension occupies a real, substantial position. It may not be obtruded or dwelt upon, but it is constantly referred to, presupposed, and hinted at. The whole Christian idea, as conceived by the Apostles, just as necessarily involved the Ascension as it did that of the Resurrection. For example, Peter's conception of Christianity involved the Ascension. Whether in his speech at the election of Matthias, or in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, or in his address in Solomon's porch after the healing of the crippled beggar, his teaching ever presupposes and involves the Ascension. He takes the doctrine and the fact for granted.* So it is with Paul and the other Apostolic writers of the New Testament.†

Again, we must observe that the Ascension was a natural and fitting termination to our Lord's earthly life, and was the just vindication of His life and claims. The position He assumed amongst men was that of Saviour of all men, Judge of all men, and Son of God. Of all these titles He proved Himself to be the rightful possessor. But if He had not ascended into the unseen state whence He had emerged, He must have remained here on earth, denying

* *Vide* Dr. Stokes' 'Commentary on the Acts' in the 'Expositor's Bible.'

† *Vide* Rom. viii. 34 ; 1 Thess. iv. 16 ; Col. iii. 1.

men the gift of the Holy Ghost—who, our Lord says, will be given only if He Himself goes away—and substituting sight for faith. Dr. Stokes has worked out a suggestion of the late Canon Liddon, showing the expediency of our Lord's Ascension. He shows that if the risen Lord remained upon earth He must have chosen one place where His glory would have been manifested. All interest in local Churches or local work would have been destroyed, because every eye and heart would be perpetually turning towards the one spot where our Lord was dwelling. The whole idea of Christianity as a scheme of moral probation would have been overthrown, and the terrified submission of slaves would have been substituted for the moral, loving obedience of the regenerate soul. The whole social order of life would also have been overthrown, and Christian self-reliance would be weakened. Instead of this, the Lord leaves the earth, and enables the Church to rise out of and above that narrow provincialism in which the Jewish spirit would fain bind it and to attain to the truly universal position He intended it to occupy. To equip the Church for this work His Ascension was absolutely necessary, for by it His visible presence was withdrawn into that unseen world which is the common destiny of all the children of God.*

Strauss, S. Laing, and others, see difficulties as to the facts of the Ascension. 'Where,' for instance, it is asked, 'did Jesus go to when He left this earth?' 'How can a palpable body, having still flesh and bones, and capable of partaking of material nourishment, be adapted to a superterrestrial residence?' 'How can a body be exempted from the law of gravity as to be capable of ascending through the air?' All these questions spring from a misunderstanding of the description given of the Ascension in

* *Vide* Dr. Stokes' 'Commentary on the Acts' in the 'Expositor's Bible.'

the Acts. The Acts simply describes a cloud mysteriously gathering around Him, which gradually quite veiled Him, and vanished with Him out of their sight over the top of the Mount of Olives. There is no mention made of ascending through infinite space, or breaking the law of gravitation. The second coming is foretold by the angels, but they do not speak of a descent from some far-off region. No ; it is always spoken of as an Apocalypse—a drawing back, that is, of the veil which hides the unseen from the visible.

Thus the end of our Lord's life corresponds to the beginning. Both were of a miraculous character ; both were foretold, the one by the prophets and the other by the Lord Himself ; and to neither is prominence given in the Apostolic writings to the special and actual facts. Angels hailed His birth, angels also hailed His ascension. Not again as a child shall He come, but 'as ye have seen Him taken away.' A 'cloud received Him out of their sight,' but, hereafter, the cloud shall be taken away, and the Lord shall be made plain to all nations. Then to Him shall be given dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, and all nations, people, and languages shall serve Him. 'His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.'

'EVEN SO COME, LORD JESUS.'

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